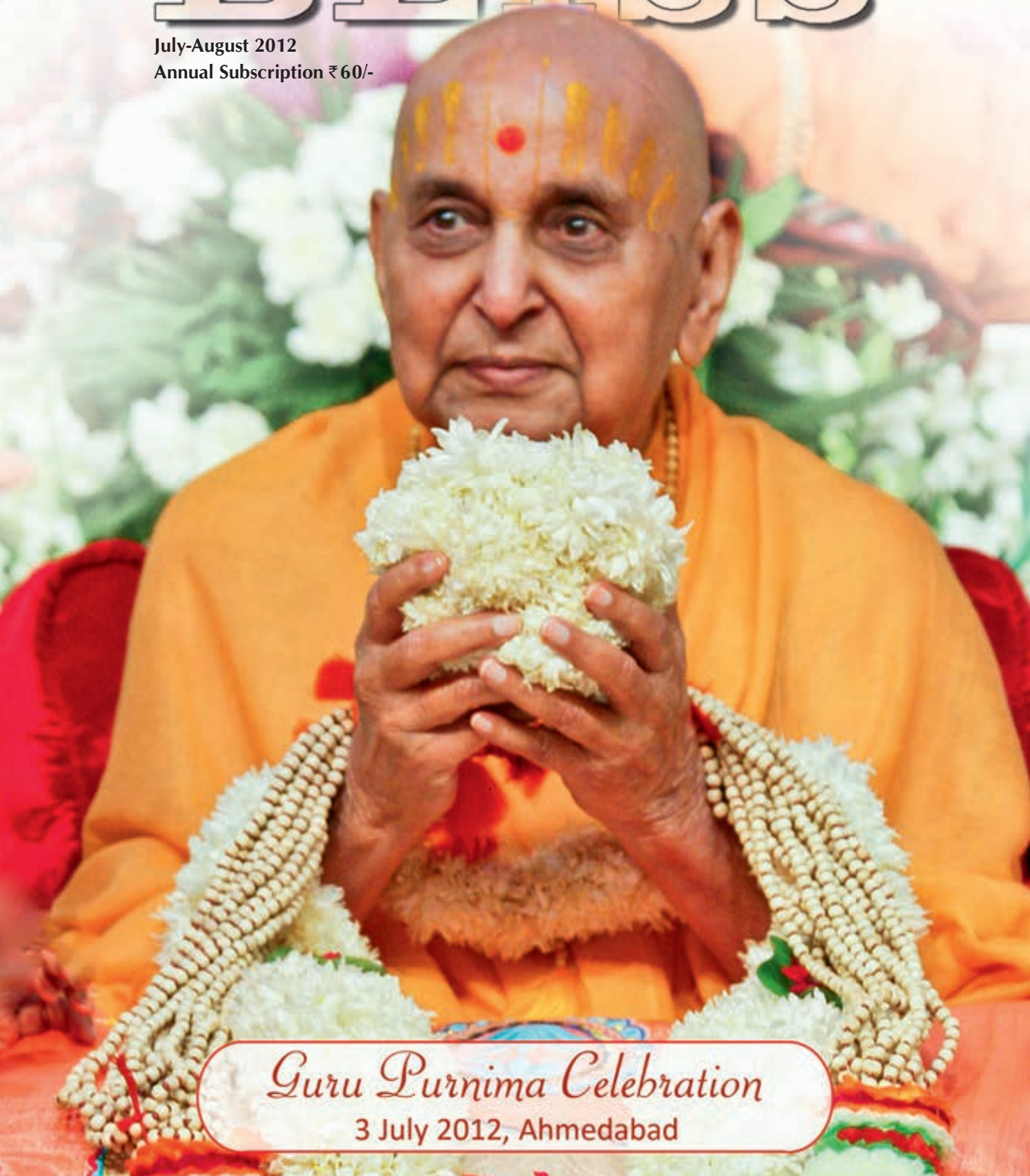


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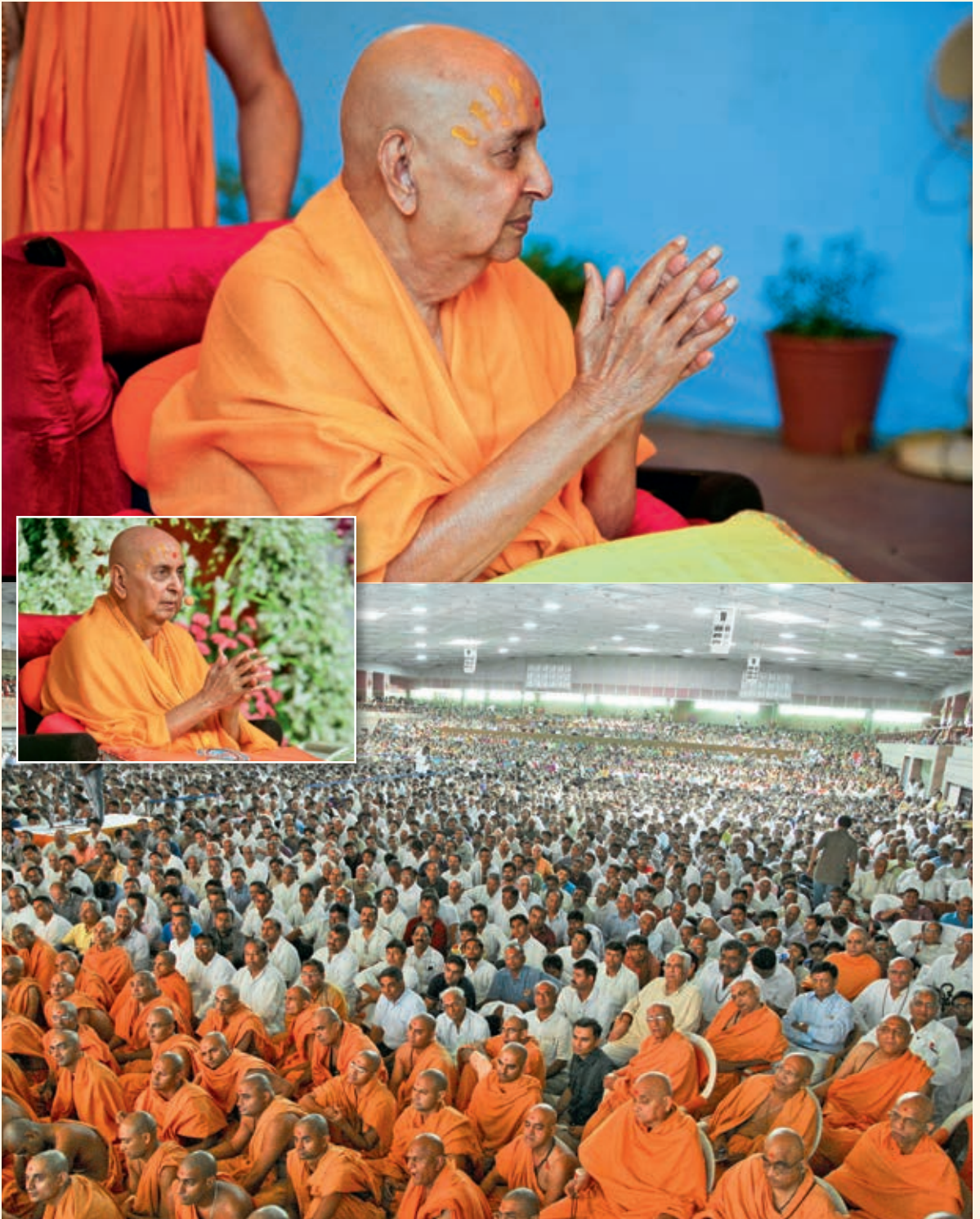
July-August 2012

Annual Subscription ₹ 60/-



Guru Purnima Celebration

3 July 2012, Ahmedabad



GURU PURNIMA CELEBRATION

3 July 2012, Ahmedabad

1. Swamishri greets the devotees on his way to Thakorji's darshan in the morning.
2. Over 31,000 devotees attended this memorable Guru Purnima celebration. Sadhus and devotees in the celebration assembly at the Yagnapurush Sabhagruh. **Inset:** Swamishri blesses the devotees with inspiring words of wisdom.

(Photos: BAPS youths)

Title Cover: Swamishri was honoured on stage with a garland of flowers and *malas* during the Guru Purnima Celebration.



Akshar Purushottam Maharaj

In April 1978 Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired and inaugurated the first issue of *Swaminarayan Bliss* in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. The bi-monthly magazine serves to enlighten BAPS youths, seniors and well-wishers about the glory of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the Akshar-Purushottam philosophy and the Gunatit guru *parampara*. It also seeks to inspire the universal values and traditions of Hinduism to pursue a happy and peaceful life by serving God and humankind.

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Published & Printed by: Swaminarayan
Aksharpith, Shahibaug, Ahmedabad -
380004. India

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Outside India (By Air Mail)

	Rupees	Pounds	US Dollars	India Rupees
1 Year	630	9	14	60
2 Years	1300	18	28	110
3 Years	1900	27	42	160

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First Word

The first Youth Convention (Yuva Adhiveshan), inspired by Yogiji Maharaj, was held in 1955 in Atladra. Yogiji Maharaj's divine vision, foresight and personal effort in shaping the lives of youths through satsang was extraordinary. During the last four decades Pramukh Swami Maharaj has given immense momentum to the BAPS *yuvak mandals* in India and abroad through satsang *sabhas*, youth activities, festivals and *seva*. Youth Conventions have helped focus the energies of youths in developing their satsang knowledge and talents.

As part of the 60th anniversary celebrations of BAPS youth activities a national *adhiveshan* was announced in January 2012. The final event was scheduled to be held in the first week of June. In all, youths could participate in seven competitions, namely, *mukhpath* (memorizing), satsang knowledge questionnaire, speech, discourse on Swamini Vato (*nirupan*), essay writing, singing and skit presentation.

The most demanding of all the competitions was *mukhpath*. For every one Vachanamrut memorized, the youth had to memorize two kirtans, five Swamini Vatos and five *sakhis* (verses). Most boys and girls strived for more than 10 hours daily in memorizing and revising during the summer vacation in April, May and early June. The Yuva Adhiveshan engaged their skills and mental concentration in spiritual exercises. The *mukhpath* competition worked personal wonders in the lives of all the participants. Even though the tradition of memorizing among the youths is fast fading and frowned upon, the benefits accrued from *mukhpath* defy the common attitude of worthlessness.

Vishal Changani (aged 23 years) of Rajkot works in a mechanical factory. He had done the highest number of *mukhpath* (108 Vachanamrut and its corresponding sets). He experienced that doing *mukhpath* had dissolved the influence of bad company in his life.

Akshay Modi (18 years) of Ahmedabad had memorized 56 Vachanamruts and its corresponding sets. Having an English medium academic background he strived in doing *mukhpath* for two-and-a-half months, spending over 10 hours daily. He vouches, "My memory power has increased. Before I had very little interest in reading, but now it has increased drastically. I get wholesome thoughts."

Dhaval Chheta (21 years) of Surat is an MBA student. He had participated in essay writing and speech competitions. He shares his views about what he has gained through youth activities, "Firstly, it protects me from bad influences (*kusang*). Secondly, I am learning the theoretical part of management in college and the practical aspects in the youth activities at the BAPS."

Many other youths who participated in *mukhpath* and other competitions expressed: "I now savour the discourses in satsang from what I have memorized."

"I am pleased to have Swami Bapa's *rajipo*."

"I've come to realize what the knowledge of Akshar-Purushottam is."

"As a student I feel the *adhiveshan* has helped me in sharpening and boosting my study skills."

"Memorizing kirtans has breathed in me joy and enthusiasm."

Months of rigorous planning and execution of this mega-event by the BAPS Satsang Central Cell have helped channelize youth energy in shaping an important period of their lives. The Yuva Adhiveshan, through the inspiration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, has truly worked miracles in the lives of thousands of BAPS youths. Such events and youth activities are the need of the hour to mould our children and shape a better and brighter future. ♦

ADHYĀY 2

BRĀHMI STHITI YOGA:

NO DESIRE FOR PLEASURES

Part 11



A shaky life is the result of a shaky mind. A shaky mind is the result of impulses. There are two types of impulses, one due to affection and the other due to spite. Impulses of affection lead to pleasure, whereas impulses of spite lead to misery. Nevertheless, when a person is taken over by either type of impulse, he loses his mental stability, since both types of impulse cause an internal disturbance. Thus, in times of extreme misery or extreme pleasure, a person begins to think the unthinkable, presume the unpresumable, becomes engrossed in futile destructive beliefs, begins to make the wrong decisions and starts to behave inappropriately. As a result, life is devoid of complete satisfaction and supreme bliss, and becomes the prey of instability.

In the *sthitpragna* (steady-minded) state such impulses are absent and the mind is stable. Thus, for true spiritual, mental and intellectual progress there is no alternative but to understand and develop the *sthitpragna* state.

NO DESIRE FOR PLEASURES

‘सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः!’ – ‘*Sukheshu vigataspruhaha!*’ – ‘No desire for pleasures!’ This is a surprising thought, but, if understood, it leads to the experience of true happiness.

Spruhā means desires. Here, the word *sukh* refers to mundane pleasures and comforts. In reality, the root of miseries lies in the desire for pleasures. It is not poverty that causes misery, but the longing to become rich is what torments

a person. When we become obsessed by desires such as ‘I should be entitled to those pleasures’ or ‘I should receive such comforts’, our degree of misery increases.

Therefore, although we have already been taught not to be disturbed by miseries with the words ‘*duhksheshu anudvignamanāhā*’, we are now also being instructed to make sure that pleasures do not disturb us too. The Gita wants to take us one step further. It reminds us that it is hard to remain stable amid miseries, but even harder to do so amid pleasures. It is easy to understand that miseries are an obstruction, but hard to understand that pleasures are not only an obstruction, but are, in fact, even more obstructive than miseries. However, if one understands this truth, one will instantly see the change in one’s life and experience more happiness.

Let us understand this with an example. Take a student near the time of his exams. When he is busy studying and someone he does not get along with comes to him, he gets disturbed. Moreover, if the disliked person purposefully annoys him, wastes his time talking about worthless matters, makes a racket or disturbs him in any other way, he becomes miserable. This is a true but miserable situation. Now, if a close friend of that same student comes a short while later, he would immediately put his books aside and himself initiate a conversation, “How are you? It’s been a long time....” Even if his friend reminds him of his exam saying that he would come back at a more convenient time, the student would wave

it off saying, “Don’t worry about my exams, I’ll manage; you must stick around for a while.” And he would then talk at length with his friend. This is also a true situation, a pleasurable true situation. The student’s preparations are hindered in both situations, the loss is the same, but the only difference is that he does not realize it in the pleasurable situation.

Mundane pleasure and pain are the two faces of *maya*. One harasses us whilst making us cry, the other cheats us whilst making us laugh. In both circumstances, our spiritual inclinations are disturbed and we forget Paramatma. We fail to understand this. However, in such situations the Satpurush is at bliss due to his steady-mindedness (*sthitpragnata*). He is engulfed in the bliss of the form of Paramatma.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan has explained this with the example of heat and frost. He says, “I also observed that the nature of the mind is like the heat of summer and the frost of winter. Just as a person can die from heat or frost, similarly, when the mind travels towards the *vishays* via the *indriyas*, if those *vishays* are full of miseries, the mind becomes ‘hot’ like the heat of summer; and if those *vishays* are pleasurable, then the mind becomes ‘cold’ like the frost of winter. Specifically, when the mind, having indulged in those *vishays* which are full of misery and having become ‘hot’ like the scorching winds of summer heat, enters a person’s heart, it makes the person extremely miserable and forces him to fall from the path of liberation. Such a person should be known to have died from the effects of heat. When the mind, having indulged in the pleasures of those *vishays* that are full of happiness and having become ‘cold’ like frost, enters a person’s heart, it makes that person complacent, thus causing him to fall from the path of liberation. He should be known to have died due to frost. However, one whose mind remains unmoved – that is, it does not become ‘hot’ upon experiencing repulsive *vishays* and does not become ‘cold’ upon experiencing pleasurable

vishays – should be known as a *Param-Bhagwat Sant*” (Vachanamrut, Gadhada II 23).

Thus, both pleasure and pain destroy internal stability. The only difference is that one is like bitter poison, the other sweet; but both are in fact poison.

For us, occasions of happiness include: an increase in wealth, continually getting comforts, attaining honour and fame, being praised by everyone, achieving success in something, being involved in a big project, being asked for advice, having one’s advice accepted, being favoured, being trusted by people and superiors, receiving the chance to do something appealing, mastering music, dance, oration or art, or having such mastery appreciated, getting something we had wished for, and that too something of high value, getting more than was wished for, getting more than needed. For us, getting any of the above without any effort, not having them taken away once obtained, and having them returned if taken are all occasions of happiness. Moreover, if we get to be with someone we like, if we are effortlessly rid of a disliked person, if someone harms our enemy, if our opponent’s flaws are being discussed, if our own virtues get noted and publicized, if someone often remembers us, if someone helps us, if someone cares for us, or if someone loves us, etc. – this is a list of things we consider as happy occasions, and we can add to it at length.

The Gita emphasizes that we should not long for such pleasures. There is no objection to attaining such pleasures, but an objection to a longing for them. If we indulge in any enjoyable worldly pleasure, we will undoubtedly develop a desire for it. Therefore, we have to be more alert on happy occasions. On such occasions our actions are transformed and even our experiences change. Everything seems nice, we do not get fed up of work, we feel like helping others even more, we feel more benevolent, our mind overflows with noble constructive thoughts, we meet others peacefully, we do not think ill of even our enemies, we do our daily puja properly – in fact,

we feel as though we have realized the secret of life. We experience many such feelings, but when we introspect, we realize that we are living with gross misunderstanding and evaluating life with the wrong measuring stick. The driving force behind all of the above experiences is the thought that 'I have received some worldly pleasure'; such experiences arise from the enjoyment we get from the overindulgence of our desires and ego, which is not going to last forever. For example, the day we receive honours and fame or comforts we like, we are more enthusiastic and more tolerant; but in fact the reason behind that joy and enthusiasm is not that we are really enthusiastic or tolerant, but these are buds that have sprouted due to our egos being nourished. For this reason, when we cease to receive honour and fame or comforts, we will cease to experience any of the above; in fact, we will begin to experience the opposite. We will feel that the world has gone down the drain, that no one is bothered anymore, that no one is worth helping and that our daily puja is useless.

Therefore, so that we do not lose our inner stability on pleasurable occasions, the Gita inspires us to attain the *sthitapragna* state (steady-mindedness), wherein there is no grief in times of misery and no delight in times of pleasure.

Someone may question that such a state is synonymous to being like an inert rock. Such a state leads to counterproductive results, since life becomes dull and joyless and we would become machines instead of humans. Machines do not feel pleasure or pain and are thus indifferent to both. Are we to become like machines? Are we to become insensitive and emotionless? Clarifying this, the Gita teaches that the *sthitapragna* state is not a state of insensitivity.

The *sthitapragna* state is full of supreme joy that is independent of the material world. It is a state overflowing with mental bliss. A machine cannot experience such joy and bliss. Those who have attained the *sthitapragna* state are ever ready to do good for all *jivas*. Also, they are overflow-

ing with feelings of supreme contentment and accomplishment resulting from the *sakshatkar* (realization) of Paramatma. There are no such feelings in a machine – neither does it have desires to do good for others nor does it have feelings of contentment or accomplishment. It is inanimate and insensitive. Feelings can never be attributed to inanimate objects. Thus, in the Gita, the *sthitapragna* state is described to enable one with an experience of divine joy. Hence, the teaching that we have to rise beyond happiness and misery is in reference to our worldly and material desires.

So, superficially, in the *sthitapragna* state one may appear to be insensitive, but there is a vast difference between the two.

The Gita teaches us how to cope with occasions of happiness. Those who have attained the *sthitapragna* state are effortlessly able to deal with such pleasures. They experience so much of Paramatma's bliss that there is no question of them longing for mundane pleasures.

This can be understood by the following true incident. In 1985, due to the insistence of the devotees of England, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj was to be weighed against gold in London. In the tradition of the Sampradaya, this was a big honour. At first, Swamishri refused saying, "A sadhu should not be honoured in this way." However, after great insistence from the devotees he agreed to being weighed against sugar crystals, which would then be weighed against gold. On the day, a grand assembly had been arranged and the festival was celebrated in the presence of thousands of devotees. Many dignitaries were present and Swamishri's glory was being sung in the assembly; everyone was elated. It was a unique occasion for a sadhu from India to be honoured in this manner in a foreign land. When the weighing ceremony began, everyone was overjoyed and hailed 'Pramukh Swami Maharajni jai' at the top of their voices with great applause. The divine, emotionally charged atmosphere would have touched anyone.

(Contd. on pg. 20)



National BAPS Youth Convention

4 to 8 June 2012, Sarangpur

The sun-soaked, sultry morning of 8 June 2012 was historic. More than 3,500 youths were attired in white (boys) and pink (girls) dress codes and seated on the sacred grounds of BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, Sarangpur. It was the final day of their four-day *adhiveshan* (convention) and *shibir* (spiritual camp). The youths were enthusiastically waving BAPS flags to the upbeat tune of the Convention's



theme song “*Ham BAPS ki shān hai*” (“We are the pride of BAPS”). The sprawling mandir grounds resounded with the ‘Jais’ of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and guru *parampara*. The ambience peaked with the arrival of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Swamishri’s divinity and the youths’ devotion and love for him were heart-stirring.

The podium before the front steps of the mandir was transformed into a decorative stage the night before. Swamishri and senior sadhus

were seated in front of the 60th Youth Activities Celebrations’ logo. The *murti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj was to Swamishri’s left. The awards to be presented to the youths were displayed on the steps in front of the stage. Swamishri released a bunch of colourful balloons attached to a replica of the celebrations logo in thermocol. Simultaneously, all the boys and girls released their balloons, transforming the sky into a riot of colours. A wave of joy swept over the entire congregation.

Swamishri and youths wave the BAPS flags on the mandir grounds of Sarangpur on the final day



YOUTH CONVENTION

The BAPS youth activities were inaugurated by Yogiji Maharaj in 1952. This year (2012) marks its 60th anniversary celebrations. Various programmes and events to uplift youths have already been accomplished during the year through the inspiration of Pramukh Swami Maharaj and the Satsang Activities Central Office in Ahmedabad. The Youth Convention in Sarangpur was one of the highlights.

The BAPS Youth Convention (*adhiveshan*) was incepted by Yogiji Maharaj about 50 years ago. Ever since, many youth conventions have followed. The announcement for the present National Youth Convention was made in January 2012. The first phase was held on inter-regional levels at the main BAPS centres in Gujarat and other states. The winners were selected to participate in the final convention in Sarangpur. Preparations for the first phase were launched through the efforts of sadhus and youth volunteers in centres spanning from Delhi, Jaipur, all of Gujarat, to Mumbai, Pune, Nasik and Hyderabad. Even *satsangi* boys from the tribal regions of Dadranagar Haveli and Tithal began their preparations in earnest. Parallelely, preparations among girls began under the guidance and assistance of female volunteers. In all, 22,000 boys and girls, from 14 years to 27 years, enrolled for the competitions in the convention. The first phase or inter-regional *adhiveshan* was held dur-

ing the first two weeks of May 2012. Boys and girls participated in 78 inter-regional *adhiveshans* at the local BAPS centres in Gujarat and Mumbai. The winners were awarded trophies, out of which 3,900 outstanding winners qualified for the National Youth Convention in Sarangpur.

The National Convention was held from 4 to 6 June 2012. Thereafter, from 6 to 8 June, a youth *shibir* (seminar) was held. The core attraction of the four-day event was the presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

ARRIVAL

4 June (Tuesday)

The youths began arriving in Sarangpur on Tuesday, 4 June from noon onwards.

Meticulous planning was made for their lodging, boarding and timetable for the competitions. Each youth was given an identity card with a roll number and the timings of his or her competitions. For male youths, the competitions were arranged at the various locations in the mandir complex. For female youths, the accommodation and competitions were arranged at the BAPS Swaminarayan Vidyamandir (school). The sadhus and volunteers of the Satsang Activities Central Office had painstakingly organized the entire event.

By the evening of 4 June, the vast mandir grounds throbbed with thousands of ebullient youths. Illuminated spots of giant cut-out

Dr Swami addresses the youth *shibir* at the Yagnapurush Sabhagruh



figures of Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj with inspiring messages and giant BAPS flags fluttering from steel poles and rooftops enhanced the convention's ambience. After the seven o'clock evening *arti* in the mandir, dinner was served to all. Thereafter the youths assembled for an introductory session in the assembly hall. A traditional welcome dance was performed on the stage of Yagnapurush Sabhagruh (assembly hall). The introductory assembly was presided over by senior sadhus: Pujya Dr Swami, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami. After the announcements of instructions for the four-day programme, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, the principal coordinator of the BAPS youth activities, addressed the gathering, "You are all very fortunate and blessed that you have prepared and come to take part in this convention. Truly, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj are divinely seeing us all here. Yogiji Maharaj's heart must be swelling with joy and congratulating you all. You have been showered upon with his infinite blessings and will be continued to do so..." Thereafter Pujya Dr Swami motivated the youths with his inspiring talks.

INAUGURATION OF YOUTH CONVENTION

5 June (Wednesday)

At about 9.00 a.m. Swamishri came out of his



Welcome dance by youths on opening day



Swamishri lights the inaugural lamp of the convention



Senior sadhus wave the BAPS flag on the inaugural day



Swamishri blesses youths who had memorized maximum Vachanamruts ,etc



A youth delivers a speech during the closing ceremony



A skit presentation



Boys appear for the written satsang *jnan-prasnotri* paper



Kirtan singing competition

room and proceeded to the mandir for Thakorji's darshan. On either side of his pathway youths dressed in white waved the BAPS flags and hailed the *jais* of Maharaj and Swamishri. After Thakorji's darshan, he came onto the assembly stage. The entire congregation of youths became ecstatic. A welcome dance, "*Rang chhāyo, ānand-no rang chhāyo re...*" was performed by youths. Swamishri clapped to the tune of the welcome song and expressed his joy and grace upon the youths. Thereafter, an impressive skit depicting why so many youths had arrived in Sarangpur was enacted by youths. Then Swamishri kindled the inaugural lamp for the convention amidst a thunder of applause by youths, the auspicious sound of conch shells and *jais*. Pujya Ishwar-charan Swami placed an identity card for the convention around Swamishri's neck. Senior sadhus honoured Swamishri with garlands. Then all the youths chorused the shlok "*Tvameva mātā cha pita tvameva...*" to express their reverence to Swamishri, thus spiritually charging the inaugural session. This was followed by a dance on the convention's theme song "*Ham BAPS ki shān hai...*" ("We are the pride of BAPS..."). Finally, Swamishri and senior sadhus waved the BAPS flags for starting the convention. Thereafter the competitions were held in the morning and late afternoon. At night, a wonderful drama, "Mr I", written by Jnanratna Swami, was performed by the youths of Vidyanagar Chhatralaya.

6 June (Thursday)

Prior to Swamishri's arrival in the morning, Pujya Viveksagar Swami addressed the youths. When Swamishri arrived, the youths who had memorized a large number of Vachanamruts, kirtans, etc. were graced by Swamishri. On arriving at the assembly stage, an effective skit on *niyam-dharma* was presented by youths. Thereafter Swamishri showered his grace upon the youths while the bhajans, "*Yogi āvo te rang mane shid lagādyo...*" and "*Mārā Swāmini thāye*



Swamishri sanctifies a trophy



Pujya Mahant Swami presents a trophy to a winner

vāh vāh vāh...” were relayed on the speakers. Swamishri happily clapped and blessed everyone.

All day, till 6.00 p.m., the youths participated in their scheduled competitions. The night session commenced with the inauguration of the youth *shibir*. The central theme was “We Are the Pride of BAPS”.

7 June (Thursday)

At about 9.00 a.m. the youths welcomed Swamishri when he arrived on the assembly stage. Swamishri, too, responded by clapping and gesturing to the bhajan, “*Āje Yagnapurushne dwār...*” The youths of Bhavnagar danced to the Youth Convention’s theme song, “*Ham BAPS ki shān hai...*” Thereafter a skit on *samp*, *suhrudaybhav* and *ekta* was enacted. At the end, a youth asked Swamishri whether they will attain Akshardham if they practiced unity and brotherhood. Swamishri replied positively by raising his hand. The entire assembly hall resounded with thunderous claps and joy. Thereafter, Swamishri took leave and the youths attended the *shibir* for the whole day.

FINAL DAY

8 June (Friday)

Today was the final day of the convention and *shibir*. The youths had assembled in the open grounds before the mandir steps at the front. Swamishri arrived on the newly decked stage on the mandir podium. The summer sun

was scorching the grounds through patches of an overcast sky. When Swamishri released a bunch of balloons the youths also released a balloon each to mark the final day of the convention. The trophies for the winners were displayed on the mandir steps before Swamishri. Pujya Yagnapriya Swami, head of the BAPS Satsang Activities Central Office, took a trophy to be sanctified by Swamishri. Swamishri also blessed a congratulatory certificate and a memento to be given to all the participants. Thereafter, a skit echoed the message that all the youths would receive awards in the form of Swamishri’s blessings. Swamishri gestured by raising his hand to endorse the message. Swamishri also responded with a gesture when asked by the master of ceremonies whether he was happy upon all the youths. Then, senior sadhus placed the prayer and confession chits written by youths into *yagna vedikas* placed before Swamishri. When Swamishri took several chits and placed them into a *vedika*, Narayanmuni Swami asked, “Swami, have their mistakes been forgiven?” Swamishri replied, “Their mistakes have been forgiven because they have been placed before Maharaj, Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj.” The entire congregation was touched by Swamishri’s profound compassion and love. Thereafter, senior sadhus, sadhus of Satsang Activities Central Office and *sant nirdeshaks* offered garlands to honour Swamishri. This was



Swamishri's blesses the youths on the final day of the convention on the open grounds of Sarangpur mandir

followed by an audio relay of the convention's theme song. With this, youths, senior sadhus, and Swamishri waved the BAPS flags. The *mantra pushpanjali* ritual was performed before Thakorji and Swamishri with a prayer voiced on behalf of everyone by Aksharvatsal Swami. Thereafter, Swamishri took leave from the stage to return to his residence. In all, Swamishri had stayed for 45 minutes in the hot sun to bless the youths. Thereafter the youths broke off for a short recess and assembled later for the *shibir*.

EVENING

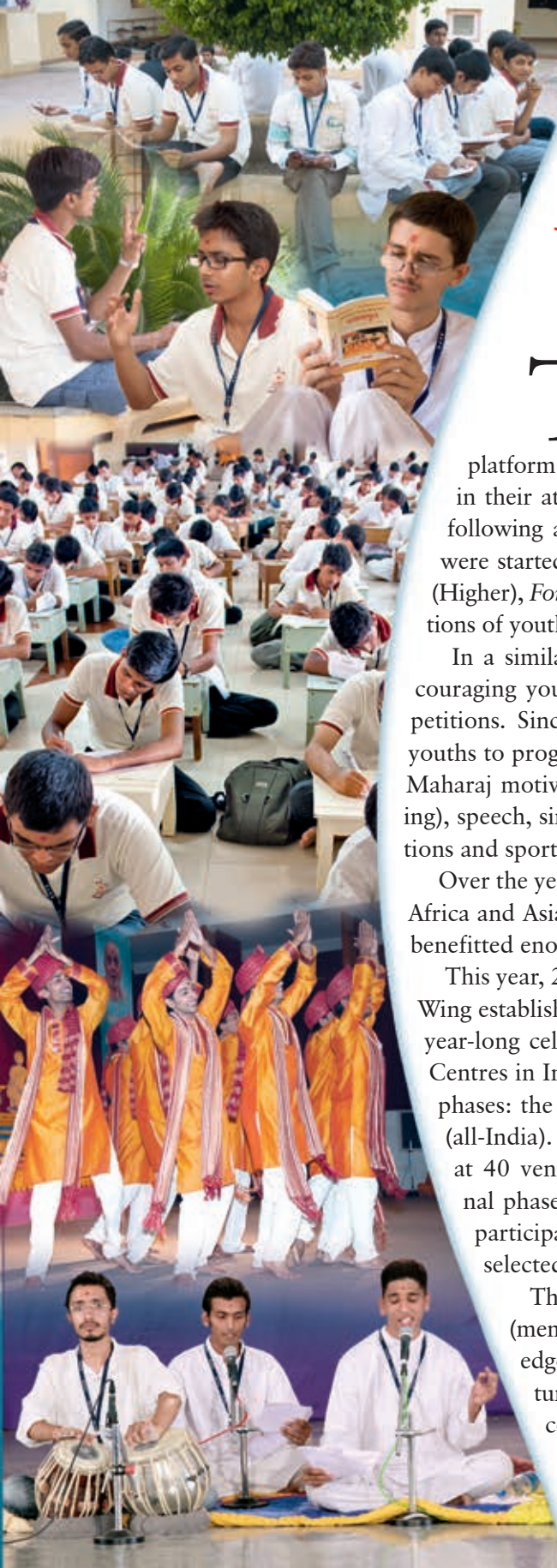
The prize-giving ceremony was held in the afternoon for girls and from 8.00 to 10.30 p.m. for the boys. In all, 475 trophies were awarded to girls and 435 trophies to boys. During the ceremony each male winner received a sacred *nadachhadi* from Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, a trophy from Pujya Mahant Swami, a certificate of felicitation from Pujya Dr Swami, a *murti* of Nilkanth Varni to outstanding winners from Pujya Kothari Swami and a memento from Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami.

Pujya Dr Swami and Pujya Mahant Swami addressed the youths saying, "All should daily

continue reciting whatever they have memorized. It will help you in all aspects of your life." Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami announced that the grand finale of the 60th Anniversary Celebration of Youth Activities will be held on 30 December 2012, in Ahmedabad. He invited all the youths to attend.

In conclusion, Pujya Yagnapriya Swami offered a vote of thanks to Swamishri, senior sadhus, *nirdeshak* sadhus, and the youth volunteers in making the event a success and to the youths for their participation. The Kothari of Sarangpur, Pujya Jnaneshvar Swami, and Pujya Narayanmuni Swami and the team of sadhus were also appreciated for their immense efforts in making all the arrangements. The Youth Convention provided opportunities to thousands of BAPS youths to bring out their hidden talents and boost their pride for BAPS. The youths departed with joy and divine memories and inspirations of Swamishri and the whole event. ♦

From Gujarati Text: Sadhu Aksharvatsaldas



All-India Youth Convention

A Unique Spiritual Olympiad

The ancient Olympics are widely believed, according to written records, to have begun in 776 BCE at Olympia in Greece. They presented a platform for youths from every country in the world to excel in their athletic abilities. They were held until 394 CE. Then, following a gap of around 1500 years, the modern Olympics were started in 1896 based on the motto '*Citus* (Faster), *Altius* (Higher), *Fortius* (Stronger)'. The Olympics have inspired generations of youths towards increasingly greater achievements.

In a similar vein, Yogiji Maharaj organized *adhiveshans*, encouraging youths to participate in a multitude of spiritual competitions. Since 1954, these *adhiveshans* have served to inspire youths to progress in their spiritual and secular endeavours. Yogiji Maharaj motivated youths to participate in *mukhpath* (memorizing), speech, singing, writing, traditional dancing, drama presentations and sports competitions.

Over the years, thousands of youths in India, UK, USA, Canada, Africa and Asia-Pacific have participated in these *adhiveshans* and benefitted enormously.

This year, 2012, marks the 60th anniversary of the BAPS Youth Wing established by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj. As part of the year-long celebrations, an *adhiveshan* involving all BAPS Youth Centres in India was launched in January 2012 and held in two phases: the *antar-kshetriya* (inter-regional) and *akhil-Bharatiya* (all-India). The inter-regional phase was held during May 2012 at 40 venues, where top achievers were selected for the final phase in June. In total, over 46,600 *yuvaks* and *yuvatis* participated in the first phase, of whom around 3,900 were selected to participate in the second phase in Sarangpur.

There were five individual competitions – *mukhpath* (memorizing), *satsang jnan prashnottari* (satsang knowledge questionnaire), speech, *nirupan* (explaining a scriptural passage) and *nibandh* (essay) – and two group competitions – singing kirtans and performing a skit.

In each phase, the youths competed in two divisions:

city and village. Each division was divided into two age groups: Nilkanth (14-18 years) and Sahajanand (19-27 years).

The youths put in tremendous efforts and set unexpectedly high standards in each competition.

In the speech and *nirupan* competitions, the youths not only made impressive presentations, but also their depth and clarity of thought tested the judges in deciding the winners. The judging sadhus commented, “In terms of subject clarity, logic, references and delivery style, the youths were outstanding.”

The judges of the group kirtan competition also had a similar experience, “The singers had an impressive grasp of rhythm, pitch and tune. The performance of the village and tribal youths were also of a high standard, even though they did not have any expert guidance. The desire to please Swamishri was evident in all the youths.”

Leading the panel of judges for the skit competition, Narayanmuni Swami commented, “Skits are a test of creativity. To write a script with a spiritual message for youths, record it and perform it is not easy. The youths did this to a high standard, beyond expectations.”

Of all the competitions, the hardest and most time-consuming competition was the *mukhpath* competition. The rules of the *purna mukhpath* competition were that the youths were required to memorize Vachanamruts, Swamini Vatos, kir-

tans and *sakhis* in sets according to a specified ratio: for every one Vachanamrut, five Swamini Vatos, two kirtans and five *sakhis* – this was counted as one set.

Today, in an era of easily accessible information, students have lost the habit of committing things to memory. Despite this, realizing that Yogi Maharaj placed great emphasis on *mukhpath* and that Pramukh Swami Maharaj is also especially pleased by such *mukhpath*, the youths endeavoured tirelessly, day and night, to memorize these spiritual messages. Their efforts were reminiscent of the ancient *gurukuls* in which learned rishis taught their students the wisdom of the Vedas and Upanishads through memorization.

The *mukhpath* competition required the youths to make focused and regular efforts to ensure that they memorized as many sets as possible. So, despite their study, work, family and other responsibilities, they organized their daily schedules to use every moment of spare time for *mukhpath*.

Youths also sacrificed their free time during the summer vacation and prepared for the various *adhiveshan* competitions.

They all felt that as a result of the *mukhpath* they had benefitted in many ways in their lives. The following are the experiences of some of the youths in their own words.

Raj Patodia of Junagadh was scheduled to visit North India and Delhi Akshardham for his

YUVA ADHIVESHAN 2012: IN FIGURES

Competitions	ANTAR-KSHETRIYA ADHIVESHAN				AKHIL-BHARATIYA ADHIVESHAN			
	Yuvaks	Yuvatis	Judges	Prizes	Yuvaks	Yuvatis	Judges	Prizes
Purna Mukhpath	9276	9036	1114	1517	694	676	114	532
Jnan Prashnottari	9276	9036	824	1523	721	703	38	189
Pravachan	2669	1995	479	453	289	216	14	70
Nirupan	1329	847	300	264	135	86	9	29
Nibandh	1770	1450	348	288	210	172	12	51
Kirtan (group)	144	140	150	150	35	34	6	24
Skit (group)	68	83	65	61	18	22	5	16
Totals	24320	22364	3280	4256	2049	1853	198	811

vacation with his parents after finishing his Standard 12 science exams. However, he cancelled the trip and stayed at Junagadh Mandir to prepare for the *mukhpath* and other competitions. He commented, “I used to study six hours daily for my Standard 12 science exams and spend another six hours preparing for the *adhiveshan*. By memorizing the Vachanamruts my power of concentration increased greatly. As a result I benefitted in my school revision as well.”

Describing how the *adhiveshan* had helped him spiritually, Raj Patodia said, “Previously, I had no interest in discourses. But, by reading the Vachanamrut and its descriptions of Brahman and Parabrahman I developed great interest and now I understand them. The *adhiveshan* also enhanced my self-confidence.”

Jaydev Patel, M.Sc. (Maths), M.Phil., is a lecturer in the renowned LD College of Engineering in Ahmedabad. In between teaching his students, he completed *mukhpath* of 51 sets of Vachanamruts, Swamini Vato, etc.

Virendra Gavaniya, studying for a diploma in Mechanical Engineering in Ranpur, had exams both before and after the *adhiveshan*. However, through efficient time management he prepared well for both. He revealed that by memorizing for the *adhiveshan*, his powers of concentration had improved. He also gave up many bad habits and began to perform daily personal puja and bow down to his parents.

Due to his family’s financial needs, Dhiru Jivrajbhai Golakia of Ramdhiri village in Palitana district had given up studies after Standard 9 to work as a courier. Despite his hectic work schedule, he memorized 50 Vachanamruts, 250 Swamini Vatos, 100 kirtans and 250 *sakhis* (verses). He recalled, “As soon as I woke up in the mornings, my mind echoed with the thought, ‘I want to participate in the *adhiveshan* and please Swamibapa.’ Normally, I wake up at 5.00 a.m. daily and go to the mandir nearby to help in the cleaning. While serving there I would memorize. I carried the *mukhpath* booklets in my pocket

and whenever I got time during the day I would memorize and revise.”

Dhirubhai remarked, “Previously, I couldn’t speak in public; now, after practicing for the *adhiveshan* speech competition, I can confidently speak to any audience.”

Keval Shethvala of Ahmedabad, studying B.E. in Instrumentation and Control, wrote the script for his *mandal*’s skit nine times before everyone was satisfied. He came to Sarangpur to participate in four competitions during a two-day break in his tight year-end exam schedule. He commented, “The knowledge I learnt from the *adhiveshan* will be of use for life, so I decided to prepare to the best of my ability and please Swami Bapa. By preparing for the *adhiveshan* I learnt how to prepare better for my college exams as well.”

In Mumbai, youths stayed in Kharghar for six weeks at the special *adhiveshan* preparation camp. Chirag Parmar, while studying for his chartered accountancy (CA) exams, memorized 101 sets. Chirag said, “After memorizing the Vachanamruts, I feel I have changed. I experience some divinity in my thoughts and actions.”

Umang Barot of Rajkot completed the third year of his degree course in mechanical engineering. He said, “The biggest benefit I gained from the *adhiveshan* was that I learnt how to better use my time. Previously, I wasted my free time while studying. But to prepare for the *adhiveshan* I made use of this free time. I was also working part-time, and teaching diploma and CBSE students. However, for the last month I left my job to focus on the *adhiveshan*. Before, I could not answer questions that people asked me about Satsang. Now, I am able to explain our history, philosophy and other topics. The *adhiveshan* has given me confidence in public speaking.”

Abhishek Jashvantbhai Brahmabhatt is an MBA student and also works for a private company. His job responsibilities meant that it was not possible to get permission for extended leave. So, he made use of every moment of free time to prepare. He commented, “I used to memorize

during my 11-km journey to and from work. I am indebted to the Sanstha for what it has given me. Without the Sanstha I would have become wayward in life.”

Girish Patel of Mahelav district had a poor memory. He recalled, “While studying I could remember very little. But the *adhiveshan* has given me confidence to read with concentration and remember.”

Dhaval Fatania of Porbandar district prepared for the *mukhpath* competition by listening to its audio while running his shop.” Despite the interruptions, he persisted and memorized 51 sets. He explained, “Yogi Bapa wished to initiate 51 youths into the sadhu-fold, so I kept that figure as my target for *mukhpath*.” Then describing the benefits he had gained, he said, “Sometimes, when I had difficulties in the shop, I used to become depressed. But now, I have darshan of Swamishri’s *murti* and I gain strength and energy. I have also gained such confidence that I can deliver a speech at short notice.”

Ghanshyam Mistry commuted daily from Mumbai to Pune for work. Using his travel time for *mukhpath*, he memorized 41 sets. He explained the benefits he gained, “Before, I used to wake up at 7.00 a.m. However, to prepare for the *adhiveshan* I began to wake up at 4-4.30 a.m. I felt fresh and was able to memorize more. By memorizing my concentration also increased. The messages of what I memorized, for example, Yogi-jī Maharaj’s words, ‘Use speech wisely, like milk’, have also helped me improve my life. The knowledge I have gained from the Vachanamrut will help me to overcome any questions in my life.”

For Jayesh Manjibhai Avaiya, studying for his final CA exams, March was a busy period in his articleship. From April, he spent 12-14 hours daily memorizing and completed 81 sets. He described what motivated his efforts, “In 2004, as a *balak*, I memorized 51 Vachanamruts during the vacation. At that time, Swamishri was pleased and gave me a prize in Sarangpur. He said to me, ‘You have intelligence, but use it for

good things whenever you get an opportunity.’ These words of Swamishri inspired me to participate in the *adhiveshan*. By memorizing, I also learnt much about our inner enemies of ego, greed, anger, lust, etc.”

Niraj M. Patel, a third year student of Electronics and Communication Engineering at Bhavnagar, memorized 50 sets. Niraj said, “Previously, I found it very difficult to memorize things. Now, having done this *mukhpath*, I am able to remember more.”

Rajesh Punaiya of Vikroli participated in the *adhiveshan*, having just finished his Standard 12 exams. His father is from Madras and so Rajesh has been raised in a non-Gujarati language environment. Still, his *sanchalak*, Jigneshbhai, encouraged and helped him to begin memorizing in Gujarati. In fact, Rajesh memorized 25 Vachanamruts in English and the equivalent Swamini Vatos, kirtans and *sakhis* in Gujarati.

Ghanshyam Purushottam Kuvadla, a 25-year-old from Bhavnagar, had studied only up to Standard 12 and since then has been working as a diamond polisher. He memorized 35 sets and said, “By doing this *mukhpath* I realized that if you endeavour you can achieve anything.”

Yogikiran Parmar, a 23-year-old working as a maintenance engineer in Div, used his free time in between work to prepare. He recalled, “Previously, I lacked confidence and doubted my ability to do anything. But, by doing *mukhpath* and through the satsang *sabhas*, I have gained self-belief and have been inspired by Swamishri to continually do good things.”

Krunal Patel of Bhavnagar memorized 60 sets, even while preparing for his final mechanical engineering exams. He informed, “Before the *adhiveshan* I had an inferiority complex. But, as I began doing *mukhpath*, my self-doubts vanished and my confidence grew. In all situations, I recall the understanding Shriji Maharaj has given in the Vachanamrut and all problems are resolved. That is the advantage I have gained by *mukhpath*.”

Sagar Mukeshbhai Darji of Khambhat spent his entire summer vacation preparing for the *adhiveshan*. And despite falling ill with malaria, he continued his preparations. Also, his uncle suffered a brain haemorrhage, but Sagar explained, “For several weeks while walking the 4 km to the hospital I would do *mukhpath*.” Despite these disturbances, Sagar memorized 60 sets.

Hardik Narela of Langa village in Umrav district memorized 51 sets, despite his extremely painful ear problem.

Yashraj Yogeshkumar Rana, a third-year commerce student, memorized 51 sets. He recounted, “Before, I used to become angry over small matters. But as I memorized Vachanamruts and other things I realized that anger had damaging consequences. Now my anger is under control.”

Kishan Rameshbhai Patel has just graduated as a civil engineer. He stayed at the BAPS students’ hostel in Surat and memorized 61 sets. He commented, “I used to fear that I would fail in my exams and other work. However, preparing for the *adhiveshan* has raised my confidence.”

Narendra Ajugia of Mumbai, studying for a Masters in Engineering at the prestigious IIT-Rorkee, said, “I’ve participated in several *adhiveshans* so far. While travelling in the congested trains I used to memorize. Participating in this *adhiveshan* has taught me to read better and manage my time more efficiently. I have studied throughout in English and found it difficult to memorize in Gujarati, but my mother gave me much help.”

Punit Patel of Kandivalli in Mumbai, said, “I had no interest in studies and started a business five years ago after my Standard 12 exams. I decided to do *mukhpath*, but due to my aversion for study I found it difficult. However, as I began to understand the Vachanamruts, I found them easier to remember. I memorized daily from 4.00 to 7.00 a.m. After work I spent all my time memorizing. Now I have gained confidence that I can study and succeed.”

Hardik Chavda was in his internship year

after completing his degree in Ayurvedic medicine. He memorized 51 sets and commented, “As I studied the Vachanamrut, I realized my own inner faults and resolved to correct them. The solution to all problems can be found in the Vachanamrut, so memorizing them has brought great change to my personal life.”

Bhavin Jayrambhai Lakhani of Bhavnagar commented, “I have learnt how to introspect and gain new inspiration daily. This is my biggest gain from the *adhiveshan*.”

Akshar Patel, a second-year Electronics and Communication Engineering student at Vasad used every spare minute to do *mukhpath* and managed to memorize 45 sets. He said, “This *adhiveshan* has developed me from within. Now I realize that Bapa knows everything and sees everything. We should not do what he dislikes. These thoughts have brought about a change in me.”

Pragadh Gokani of Vadodara, an architect working in Ahmedabad, completed *mukhpath* of 26 sets and also participated in other competitions. He described, “This *adhiveshan* has been a great opportunity to mould my life.”

The youths of Surat prepared diligently for the *mukhpath* and other competitions and were also actively involved in the decoration for the final *adhiveshan* in Sarangpur.

Jaykishan Chandpara, who had just appeared for the Standard 12 science and AIEEE exams, revealed, “I used to occasionally read the Vachanamrut, but I have never even opened the Swamini Vato book before. I saw the Bhaktachintamani and Harililamrut texts for the first time in my life. I memorized selected verses from them. I found great joy in reading and learning from all these shastras. Now I have resolved to read the biographies of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and our gurus during my free time at college.”

Shivam Chauhan of Ahmedabad competed in the final *adhiveshan* just four days after his year-end engineering exams. Through regular effort over the previous months he had memorized 60 sets. Akshar Modi of Isanpur in Ahmedabad suf-

fered from a bout of chickenpox and other skin infections. Yet, he memorized 42 sets while staying at the mandir. Maulik Malli of Shayona City, Ahmedabad, left his job to prepare and memorize 30 sets. Hiren Mavani of Satellite, Ahmedabad, put in many hours of efforts for the *adhiveshan* while also preparing for his CA exams.

To help the *yuvaks*, the sadhus at all the centres were instrumental in providing the necessary facilities and guidance for preparation. They took great care to ensure the *yuvaks* could prepare with minimum hindrance. In Mumbai, Surat, Ahmedabad and other centres, the *yuvaks* stayed in the mandir for 2-3 months. They put in 12-14 hours of effort daily to prepare for the *mukhpath* and other competitions.

The youths also gained much support and inspiration from their parents and other family

(Contd. from pg. 7)

Nevertheless, during these moments of great honour, Pramukh Swami Maharaj's response reminds us of the *sthitapragna* state mentioned in the Gita. He was humbly looking downwards with Shri Harikrishna Maharaj in his lap and his hands folded. He did not have even the slightest trace of ego in having attained such a great honour. When it was Pramukh Swami's turn to address the assembly, his words amazed everyone. He said, "First I bow to Parabrahman *saravavatari* Purushottam Bhagwan Swaminarayan, who has given me this body. Then to my gurus, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj, who have blessed and accepted me. It is due to their grace and blessings that I am standing in front of you today; therefore, I bow to them continuously. If it was not for their grace, I would not be standing here today (he then became emotional). It is my great fortune that they have blessed me and given me the chance to serve. They gave me the strength to do this *seva*. Furthermore, without the blessings of the sadhus and scholars of India, and without your assistance, none of this would have been possible.... It is incorrect to believe that I have done this on my own. Paramatma is

members. The devout and sincere efforts of the youths were solely to please Bhagwan Swaminarayan and *guruhari* Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Everyone felt that more valuable than any prizes they may have won was the knowledge they had gained that would be useful for life, and Swamishri's innermost blessings they had received.

The attitude of the youths reflected the message of the Olympic Games: "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well."

Thus, by participating in this way, all the youths received Swamishri's innermost blessings and benefits in life. ♦

Gujarati Report: Sadhu Aksharvatsaldas and youths

the all-doer; not even a dry leaf moves without his wish. It is by his power that creation, sustenance and destruction take place. Without his strength, even a twig cannot be broken...."

During the whole address, he did not say a single word expressing joy from the honour of the *suvarna tula*. All those who were present experienced that Swamishri does not have even the slightest desire for such honours. This was a living example of the *sthitapragna* state mentioned in the Gita. Swamishri, who faces hard times without grief, does not get carried away in times of pleasure either. Everyone saw at first hand that his inner feelings and understanding do not get obscured, and he maintains extreme stability. This *sthitapragna* state is the reason why he is at great peace.

We can also experience that great peace if we imbibe this *sthitapragna* state in our lives, by not lamenting in hard times or getting carried away in times of pleasure.

Thus, the words of the Gita '*duhkheshu anudvignamanāhā sukheshu vigataspruhaha*' raise us to the lofty terrains of spirituality and make life blissful. ♦

National Youth Convention OUTSTANDING ACHIEVERS



Thousands of youths responded with tremendous enthusiasm to participate in the All-India Yuva Adhiveshan. And on the final day, as Swamishri sanctified the prizes and blessed them all, many shed tears of joy as Swamishri said, “All who have participated in the *adhiveshan* have received the prize of Yogiji Maharaj’s blessings...”

In the 1990 Yuva Adhiveshan Swamishri congratulated the youths who had participated, “This prize is greater than millions of Nobel Prizes.... I bow my head in respect to your sincere endeavours. Even offering countless *sashtang dandvats* to you is not enough. Congratulations.... Congratulations... congratulations to you all.”

In 2012, the time and place were different, but the emotions were the same. In the serene and sacred atmosphere of Sarangpur, the youths were just as excited. They revelled in the divine darshan and blessings of Swamishri and the affectionate felicitations from the *sadguru* sadhus.

The following pages pay tribute to the prizewinners. In acknowledgement of the tremendous efforts of the youths, who memorized between 31 and 50 sets (*vishesh yogyata*) and over 51 sets of Vachanamruts, Swamini Vatos, kirtans and *sakhis*, their photos have been included. The lists are presented according to the ‘Sahajanand’ and ‘Nilkanth’ categories in the city and village divisions.

Our hearty congratulations to all prizewinners and all the participants.

	Vishishth Yogyata: Sahajanand (City) VISHAL CHANGANANI Kalavad Road, Rajkot. Vachanamrut: 108, Vato: 610, Kirtan: 234, Sakhi: 595		SHIVAM CHAUHAN Jivraj Park, Ahmedabad Vachanamrut: 54, Vato: 290, Kirtan: 114, Sakhi: 300		HARDIK CHAVDA Junagadh Vachanamrut: 51, Vato: 250, Kirtan: 102, Sakhi: 240
	KRUNAL SOLANKI Kadiyavad, Jamnagar. Vachanamrut: 78, Vato: 400, Kirtan: 153, Sakhi: 390		AKSHAY MODI Nava Vadaj, Ahmedabad Vachanamrut: 56, Vato: 280, Kirtan: 112, Sakhi: 280		NIRAV MEDPARA BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 50, Vato: 250, Kirtan: 99, Sakhi: 250
	JAY PATEL Ranip, Ahmedabad Vachanamrut: 33, Vato: 390, Kirtan: 141, Sakhi: 470		NILKANTH PATEL BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 55, Vato: 270, Kirtan: 110, Sakhi: 270		SUKET THAKKAR BAPS Chhatralaya, Nadiad Vachanamrut: 45, Vato: 240, Kirtan: 99, Sakhi: 275
	BHAVIK MODI BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 65, Vato: 320, Kirtan: 130, Sakhi: 325		MEHUL GOPANI BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 55, Vato: 260, Kirtan: 108, Sakhi: 275		DARSHAN PATEL BAPS Chhatralaya, Nadiad Vachanamrut: 48, Vato: 250, Kirtan: 90, Sakhi: 255
	DHARMESH PATEL BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 63, Vato: 310, Kirtan: 128, Sakhi: 320		JAYDEEP JADAV BAPS Chhatralaya, Nadiad Vachanamrut: 45, Vato: 275, Kirtan: 108, Sakhi: 300		ANIKET TIMBADIYA BAPS Chhatralaya, Surat Vachanamrut: 48, Vato: 260, Kirtan: 84, Sakhi: 245
	AMIT POKAR BAPS Chhatralaya, Nadiad Vachanamrut: 60, Vato: 300, Kirtan: 120, Sakhi: 300		SAANKET PATEL BAPS Chhatralaya, Surat Vachanamrut: 56, Vato: 250, Kirtan: 102, Sakhi: 275		RAVI CHOTALIYA BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 42, Vato: 225, Kirtan: 99, Sakhi: 245
	KRUNAL PATEL BAPS Chhatralaya, Bhavnagar Vachanamrut: 60, Vato: 300, Kirtan: 114, Sakhi: 300		RIDDHESH THAKKAR Paldi, Ahmedabad. Vachanamrut: 51, Vato: 265, Kirtan: 99, Sakhi: 290		NIRAV GOYANI BAPS Chhatralaya, Nadiad Vachanamrut: 42, Vato: 220, Kirtan: 72, Sakhi: 255
	GHANSHYAM BHEDA Kandivali West, Mumbai Vachanamrut: 57, Vato: 295, Kirtan: 114, Sakhi: 300		YOGENDRA RAULAJI BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 52, Vato: 260, Kirtan: 104, Sakhi: 260		NIKUNJ AVAIYA BAPS Chhatralaya, Surat Vachanamrut: 48, Vato: 235, Kirtan: 75, Sakhi: 235
	KIRTAN ZALA BAPS Chhatralaya, Nadiad Vachanamrut: 57, Vato: 290, Kirtan: 120, Sakhi: 300		ANKIT SAVALIYA BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 51, Vato: 255, Kirtan: 102, Sakhi: 255		BALKRUSHNA JANI BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 43, Vato: 215, Kirtan: 86, Sakhi: 215
	JAYESH M. AVAIYA Aksharvadi, Surat Vachanamrut: 66, Vato: 300, Kirtan: 60, Sakhi: 375		Vishesh Yogyata: Sahajanand (City) MANAN THAKAR BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 51, Vato: 240, Kirtan: 102, Sakhi: 255		SATISH KALKANI BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 43, Vato: 215, Kirtan: 84, Sakhi: 205



SAGAR VAGHANI
BAPS Chhatralaya, Nadiad
Vachanamrut: 30, Vato: 245,
Kirtan: 75, Sakhi: 260



RUDRESH R. RAVAL
BAPS Chhatralaya, Atladra
Vachanamrut: 36, Vato: 170,
Kirtan: 69, Sakhi: 180



AARSH PATEL
Vileparle East, Mumbai
Vachanamrut: 21, Vato: 135,
Kirtan: 87, Sakhi: 160



PRADIP N. VALA
Akshardip, Surat
Vachanamrut: 42, Vato: 195,
Kirtan: 75, Sakhi: 250



GHANSHYAM KUVADIYA
Bortalav, Bhavnagar
Vachanamrut: 35, Vato: 175,
Kirtan: 70, Sakhi: 175



VISHAL G. MORDIYA
Katargaam, Surat
Vachanamrut: 27, Vato: 165,
Kirtan: 54, Sakhi: 180



HARDIKDAAN NAROLA
BAPS Chhatralaya, Bhavnagar
Vachanamrut: 39, Vato: 210,
Kirtan: 81, Sakhi: 225



BHARAT MOKARIYA
BAPS Chhatralaya, Nadiad
Vachanamrut: 35, Vato: 175,
Kirtan: 70, Sakhi: 175



HEMANG PATEL
BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar
Vachanamrut: 31, Vato: 155,
Kirtan: 60, Sakhi: 155



CHIRAG P. PARMAR
Andheri West, Mumbai
Vachanamrut: 30, Vato: 325,
Kirtan: 54, Sakhi: 220



AKSHAR G. DIYORA
Kapodara, Surat
Vachanamrut: 24, Vato: 190,
Kirtan: 80, Sakhi: 190



Vishishth Yagyata: Nilkanth (City)
AKSHAR MODI
Memnagar, Ahmedabad
Vachanamrut: 57, Vato: 250,
Kirtan: 124, Sakhi: 290



RAHUL TIMBADIYA
BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar
Vachanamrut: 40, Vato: 200,
Kirtan: 80, Sakhi: 200



AJAY GOHEL
BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar
Vachanamrut: 35, Vato: 165,
Kirtan: 70, Sakhi: 175



DHAIVAL G. MAKVANA
Katargaam, Surat
Vachanamrut: 57, Vato: 310,
Kirtan: 81, Sakhi: 275



JAYDEV PATEL
Nadiad
Vachanamrut: 36, Vato: 190,
Kirtan: 84, Sakhi: 190



DISHANT PATEL
Gandhinagar
Vachanamrut: 33, Vato: 155,
Kirtan: 66, Sakhi: 170



Vishesh Yagyata: Nilkanth (City)
KISHAN PATEL
BAPS Chhatralaya, Surat
Vachanamrut: 39, Vato: 265,
Kirtan: 81, Sakhi: 285



JAINESH PATEL
BAPS Chhatralaya, Nadiad
Vachanamrut: 27, Vato: 205,
Kirtan: 81, Sakhi: 225



AKSHAR H. PATEL
Sardarnagar, Vadodara
Vachanamrut: 33, Vato: 135,
Kirtan: 66, Sakhi: 185



PARTH DUNGANANI
BAPS Chhatralaya, Gondal
Vachanamrut: 45, Vato: 190,
Kirtan: 93, Sakhi: 240



BHADRESH ITALIYA
BAPS Chhatralaya, Surat
Vachanamrut: 48, Vato: 240,
Kirtan: 96, Sakhi: 255



PRANAV PANDYA
BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar
Vachanamrut: 36, Vato: 100,
Kirtan: 78, Sakhi: 160



AKSHAR BHANDERI
BAPS Chhatralaya, Gondal
Vachanamrut: 51, Vato: 240,
Kirtan: 75, Sakhi: 200



ROHAN H. MISTRY
Kandivali West, Mumbai
Vachanamrut: 40, Vato: 185,
Kirtan: 57, Sakhi: 185



GAUTAM ASUNDARA
BAPS Chhatralaya, Surat
Vachanamrut: 18, Vato: 160,
Kirtan: 82, Sakhi: 180



AKSHAR V. MODI
Isanpur, Ahmedabad
Vachanamrut: 42, Vato: 210,
Kirtan: 84, Sakhi: 210



SANJAY PRAJAPATI
BAPS Chhatralaya, Surat
Vachanamrut: 30, Vato: 165,
Kirtan: 78, Sakhi: 195



NIRAV B. SALIYA
Katargaam, Surat
Vachanamrut: 31, Vato: 155,
Kirtan: 62, Sakhi: 155



GHANSHYAM P. KATKAR
Bhayandar, Mumbai
Vachanamrut: 39, Vato: 235,
Kirtan: 69, Sakhi: 235

	INDRA PATEL Ranip, Ahmedabad Vachanamrut: 40, Vato: 195, Kirtan: 80, Sakhi: 200		UMANG PRAJAPATI Bopal, Ahmedabad Vachanamrut: 36, Vato: 165, Kirtan: 72, Sakhi: 170		DHAIVAL FATANIA Porbandar Vachanamrut: 36, Vato: 165, Kirtan: 39, Sakhi: 205
	VANDAN PRAJAPATI Bopal, Ahmedabad Vachanamrut: 40, Vato: 195, Kirtan: 80, Sakhi: 200		BANKIM MODI Paldi, Ahmedabad Vachanamrut: 34, Vato: 160, Kirtan: 68, Sakhi: 170		RIKIN PATEL Karamsad, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 27, Vato: 150, Kirtan: 57, Sakhi: 160
	ANAND R. PATEL Atladra, Vadodara Vachanamrut: 39, Vato: 195, Kirtan: 80, Sakhi: 195		NIRDESH V. MADHANI Racecourse, Vadodara Vachanamrut: 35, Vato: 175, Kirtan: 60, Sakhi: 170		AKASH M. PATEL Boriyavi Vachanamrut: 24, Vato: 135, Kirtan: 56, Sakhi: 140
	NITIN AVAIYA BAPS Chhatralaya, Gondal Vachanamrut: 30, Vato: 190, Kirtan: 72, Sakhi: 235		SWAPNIL DARJI BAPS Chhatralaya, Gondal Vachanamrut: 21, Vato: 185, Kirtan: 69, Sakhi: 165		Vishesh Yagyata: Nilkanth (Village) VANDAN S. RANPURVALA Vanakbori Vachanamrut: 39, Vato: 180, Kirtan: 84, Sakhi: 200
	UMANG SUTHAR Nava Vadaj, Ahmedabad Vachanamrut: 36, Vato: 175, Kirtan: 72, Sakhi: 180		Vishishth Yagyata: Sahajanand (Village) YOGESH RAJYAGURU Porbandar Vachanamrut: 51, Vato: 225, Kirtan: 90, Sakhi: 240		SAGAR M. DARJI Undel, Khambhat Vachanamrut: 33, Vato: 180, Kirtan: 69, Sakhi: 235
	ANKIT YADAV Jivrajpark, Ahmedabad Vachanamrut: 36, Vato: 170, Kirtan: 72, Sakhi: 175		Vishesh Yagyata: Sahajanand (Village) DHIRU G. GOLAKIYA Palitana Vachanamrut: 30, Vato: 210, Kirtan: 78, Sakhi: 230		KIRAN J. PATEL Tarapur Vachanamrut: 35, Vato: 175, Kirtan: 69, Sakhi: 175
	CHANDRAKANT VAGHELA Isanpur, Ahmedabad Vachanamrut: 35, Vato: 175, Kirtan: 70, Sakhi: 175		CHIRAG P. RANPARIYA Uttarsanda Vachanamrut: 30, Vato: 170, Kirtan: 69, Sakhi: 175		RONAK N. PATEL Moraj, Tarapur Vachanamrut: 35, Vato: 165, Kirtan: 60, Sakhi: 175
	ANSHUL B. PATEL BAPS Chhatralaya, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 35, Vato: 175, Kirtan: 70, Sakhi: 175		VIJAY P. PATEL Olpad Vachanamrut: 33, Vato: 165, Kirtan: 66, Sakhi: 165		TEJAS G. PRAJAPATI Bakrol, Vidyanagar Vachanamrut: 27, Vato: 135, Kirtan: 54, Sakhi: 120

OTHER PRIZEWINNERS IN MUKHPATH AND OTHER COMPETITIONS

In addition to the above two prize categories for the *mukhpath* competitions, prizes were also awarded in three further categories: first, second and third. Prizes for the other competitions were also awarded in these three categories. The following is a list of all the prizewinners of the various competitions, according to category.

Note: Following each prizewinner's name is the youth centre he represented. Where 'Yuva' is written in brackets it indicates, he participated from a centre by run the BAPS Youth Activities Wing; 'Chhatralaya' indicates he represented the BAPS Chhatralaya in that city.

**PURNA MUKHPATH
SAHAJANAND (CITY)**

■ **FIRST CATEGORY**

1. Sagar P. Kava, Mumbai 2 (Yuva)
2. Kivyes Patel, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
3. Pragadh Gokani, Vadodara 1 (Yuva)
4. Parth Thummar, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
5. Prakash Rajput, Mehasana (Chhatralaya)
6. Shreyas V. Pandya, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
7. Niraj Patel, Bhavnagar (Chhatralaya)
8. Dhruv Patel, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
9. Jayraj Gohil, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
10. Bharat Patel, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
11. Chandresh D. Gopani, Surat 1 (Yuva)
12. Bhargav Jakhania, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
13. Jignesh Khunt, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
14. Rajnish Chauhan, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
15. Nikhil Adroja, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)

■ **SECOND CATEGORY**

16. Manish M. Solanki, Vadodara 1 (Yuva)
17. Jaydeep Vihol, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
18. Nirjar M. Mistry, Vadodara 2 (Yuva)
19. Dansukh A. Diyora, Surat 1 (Yuva)
20. Rohit Pokiya, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
21. Sumit Dhangiya, Surat 2 (Yuva)
22. Pushparaj Mahida, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
23. Dharmesh Manek, Surat (Chhatralaya)
24. Bharat S. Bakrania, Mumbai 3 (Yuva)
25. Anand Jadwani, Jamnagar 2
26. Bharat Kucha, Surat (Chhatralaya)
27. Yagnik Sojitra, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
28. Shilvir Patel, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
29. Mehul Kikani, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
30. Rakesh Patel, Nadiad (Yuva)
31. Ritin R. Patel, Surat 2 (Yuva)
32. Birju Vachhani, Surat (Chhatralaya)
33. Jaysukh K. Mansata, Mumbai 1 (Yuva)
34. Bharat Bokha, Ahmedabad 1 (Yuva)
35. Bhavin Lakhani, Bhavnagar 1 (Yuva)
36. Deep Patel, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
37. Jayjit Jadeja, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
38. Dhaval Darji, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
39. Vivek Bhagat, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
40. Dipen Patel, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
41. Rudresh Patel, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
42. Chintan Shah, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)

43. Dharmesh Jethwa, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)

■ **THIRD CATEGORY**

44. Piyush J. Chavala, Surat 1 (Yuva)
45. Pratik Patel, Pune
46. Bhavesh Kalathiya, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
47. Sneh Patel, Ahmedabad 1 (Yuva)
48. Balu Amalgiri, Navsari (Yuva)
49. Biren Patel, Bharuch (Yuva)
50. Ranmal Gohel, Bhavnagar (Chhatralaya)
51. Shailesh R. Haripara, Surat 1 (Yuva)
52. Bhavesh G. Savani, Surat 1 (Yuva)
53. Kirtan Gohel, Rajkot (Yuva)
54. Nilesh G. Devulkar, Navsari (Yuva)
55. Ankit G. Shah, Mumbai 1 (Yuva)
56. Sudhir Pansuriya, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
57. Nikin Panchal, Mumbai 2 (Yuva)
58. Kaushik Patel, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
59. Kiran G. Diyora, Surat 1 (Yuva)
60. Punit B. Patel, Mumbai 2 (Yuva)
61. Ashwin B. Mavani, Surat 1 (Yuva)
62. Dinesh Rangpara, Junagadh
63. Parth S. Patel, Atladara (Chhatralaya)
64. Dipendra Zhala, Surat (Chhatralaya)
65. Kishan P. Patel, Anand (Yuva)
66. Hardik Mahant, Jamnagar 2
67. Vishal B. Patel, Nadiad (Yuva)
68. Suresh Varsani, Surat (Chhatralaya)
69. Bhagwat Chalodia, Surat 1 (Yuva)
70. Vaibhav S. Yavalkar, Mumbai 2 (Yuva)

**PURNA MUKHPATH
NILKANTH (CITY)**

■ **FIRST CATEGORY**

1. Jigar J. Shah, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
 2. Harsh K. Patel, Vadodara 1 (Yuva)
 3. Urvish Patel, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
 4. Prashant Patel, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)
 5. Akshar Chauhan, Mumbai 2 (Yuva)
 6. Nikunj Kayada, Gondal (Chhatralaya)
 7. Ashish Kayada, Gondal (Chhatralaya)
- **SECOND CATEGORY**
8. Sugam Thakkar, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
 9. Siddharth Katharotia, Ahmedabad 1
 10. Hardik Devganiya, Gondal (Yuva)
 11. Darshan R. Chauhan, Mumbai 2 (Yuva)
 12. Kunal R. Mokasadar, Mumbai 1 (Chhatralaya)
 13. Saurabh K. Patel, Vidyanagar (Yuva)
 14. Maulik Malli, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)
 15. Jaikishan J. Chandpara, Surat 1 (Yuva)
 16. Karan Rana, Surat 2 (Yuva)
 17. Yogin Virani, Ahmedabad 1 (Yuva)
 18. Ishan Modi, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)

19. Rajesh Punaiya, Mumbai 3 (Yuva)
 20. Kunal S. Darji, Mumbai 1 (Yuva)
 21. Vandan Gor, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)
 22. Jay T. Patel, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
- **THIRD CATEGORY**
23. Harsh K. Parekh, Vadodara 2 (Yuva)
 24. Raviraj B. Patel, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
 25. Vinay B. Kumbhar, Navsari (Yuva)
 26. Hardik Pitroda, Gondal (Chhatralaya)
 27. Harsh P. Shah, Mumbai 2 (Yuva)
 28. Sagar P. Patel, Bharuch (Yuva)
 29. Ujaash Patel, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)
 30. Vivek Kapadia, Gondal (Chhatralaya)
 31. Akshar Patel, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
 32. Dhruvil R. Patel, Vadodara 1 (Yuva)
 33. Nilkanth Suthar, Bhavnagar 1 (Yuva)
 34. Jaydeep Makwana, Rajkot (Yuva)
 35. Umang Suthar, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)
 36. Harikrushna L. Kevadia, Surat 1 (Yuva)
 37. Nayan Antiya, Mumbai (Yuva)
 38. Vishal R. Malkani, Mehasana
 39. Vishal K. Solanki, Mumbai 1 (Yuva)
 40. Hardik A. Vasava, Vadodara 1 (Yuva)

**PURNA MUKHPATH
SAHAJANAND (VILLAGE)**

■ **FIRST CATEGORY**

1. Jignesh J. Patel, Olpad (Yuva)
2. Darpan J. Shah, Dhuvaran (Yuva)
3. Himesh K. Panchal, Vidyanagar (Yuva)
4. Jay V. Parekh, Vidyanagar (Yuva)
5. Mihir K. Patel, Umreth (Yuva)

■ **SECOND CATEGORY**

6. Vatsal Chhaya, Bangalore
7. Girish K. Jethwani, Dahod
8. Aniket K. Prajapati, Petlad

■ **THIRD CATEGORY**

9. Raviraj B. Patel, Sojitra
10. Gopal C. Vaghela, Savarkundla
11. Raghuvirsinh B. Rathod, Savarkundla
12. Manish D. Vegad, Kim (Yuva)
13. Mayur R. Gohel, Petlad
14. Dhaval B. Patel, Mehalav (Yuva)
15. Mahesh N. Prajapati, Vidyanagar (Yuva)
16. Mukesh Varmora, Surendranagar
17. Dhaval Kumar B. Patel, Simaliya
18. Jignesh D. Patel, Dharasana (Yuva)
19. Dharmik Thakkar, Radhu
20. Pinkalkumar D. Patel, Dharasana (Yuva)
21. Hardik V. Prajapati, Bocharan (Yuva)
22. Hiren D. Patel, Bocharan (Yuva)

**PURNA MUKHPATH COMPETITION
NILKANTH (VILLAGE)**

■ **FIRST CATEGORY**

1. Vishal Bhatiya, Vidyanagar (Yuva)

■ THIRD CATEGORY

2. Manish K. Parmar, Dahod
3. Darshan B. Patel, Boriyavi (Yuva)
4. Ankit J. Solanki, Areth (Yuva)
5. Virendra G. Gavani, Botad
6. Dhruvkumar S. Patel, Porda
7. Ajay D. Solanki, Matar
8. Jaideep G. Dhamecha, Savarkundla
9. Naresh Shinghadiya, Porbandar
10. Mohit Kalvani, Jaipur
11. Hiren B. Dodiya, Sojitra
12. Hanuman Verma, Jaipur
13. Dharmendra Ramchandani, Jaipur
14. Rahul D. Chauhan, Amreli (Yuva)
15. Hardik A. Patel, Khambholaj
16. Amar Thanki, Porbandar
17. Sunil Ramchandani, Jaipur

ELOCUTION COMPETITION SAHAJANAND (CITY)

■ FIRST CATEGORY

1. Rohit Pokiya, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
2. Rakesh R. Sanghani, Surat 1 (Yuva)
3. Viral H. Mistry, Mumbai 2 (Yuva)
4. Pavan Adeshra, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)

■ SECOND CATEGORY

5. Hardik Mistry, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
6. Harikrushna Vasani, Pune
7. Mayur P. Parmar, Vadodara 2 (Yuva)
8. Jayesh M. Avaiya, Surat 1 (Yuva)
9. Nikunj Avaiya, Surat (Chhatralaya)
10. Umang Barot, Rajkot (Yuva)
11. Rajnish Chauhan, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
12. Kirtan Zhala, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)

■ THIRD CATEGORY

13. Kunal Patel, Bhavnagar (Chhatralaya)
14. Puneet Pithva, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)
15. Bhavik Vaghela, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)
16. Keval Shethwala, Ahmedabad 1 (Yuva)
17. Shivam Chauhan, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
18. Manish Darji, Ahmedabad 1 (Yuva)

ELOCUTION COMPETITION NILKANTH (CITY)

■ FIRST CATEGORY

1. Sandeep Solanki, Junagadh
2. Sharad Kakkad, Rajkot (Yuva)
3. Ghanshyam Chudasma, Ahmedabad 1 (Yuva)

■ SECOND CATEGORY

4. Sharad Parmar, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)
5. Vandan H. Barot, Bharuch (Yuva)
6. Tirth N. Jani, Vadodara 1 (Yuva)
7. Vishal K. Solanki, Mumbai 1 (Yuva)
8. Krunal Mukte, Pune
9. Bharat Changani, Rajkot (Yuva)

ELOCUTION COMPETITION SAHAJANAND (VILLAGE)

■ FIRST CATEGORY

1. Dharmik Thakkar, Radhu
2. Uttam R. Desai, Jetpur
3. Lalit R. Gohel, Bochasan (Yuva)

■ SECOND CATEGORY

4. Chetan D. Bhati, Disa
5. Vatsal Chhaya, Bangalore

■ THIRD CATEGORY

6. Nirav B. Patel, Botad
7. Brijesh Patel, Ghanna (Yuva)

ELOCUTION COMPETITION NILKANTH (VILLAGE)

■ FIRST CATEGORY

1. Akshar S. Gajjar, Vidyanagar (Yuva)
2. Jaipal C. Gohel, Vallabhipur

■ SECOND CATEGORY

3. Darshit R. Dudhrejiya, Mahuva
4. Ravindra P. Thakkar, Radhu
5. Maulesh Patel, Boriyavi (Yuva)

■ THIRD CATEGORY

6. Dhruvkumar K. Parmar, Sojitra
7. Mishal J. Parmar, Daneja (Yuva)
8. Ronak N. Patel, Tarapore (Yuva)

NIRUPAN COMPETITION SAHAJANAND (CITY)

■ FIRST CATEGORY

1. Sudhir Patel, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
2. Nilkanth Patel, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
3. Kivyesb Patel, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
4. Viral Patel, Ahmedabad 1 (Yuva)

■ SECOND CATEGORY

5. Jai Parikh, Rajkot (Yuva)
6. Yogesh B. Pavasiya, Surat 1 (Yuva)
7. Vimal K. Sambalpara, Surat 1 (Yuva)

■ THIRD CATEGORY

8. Jaydeep Baraiya, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
9. Kupdip Bumatariya, Bhavnagar (Chhatralaya)
10. Ronak Mehtaliya, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)

NIRUPAN COMPETITION NILKANTH (CITY)

■ FIRST CATEGORY

1. Akshar Chauhan, Mumbai 2 (Yuva)

■ SECOND CATEGORY

2. Kamal R. Prajapati, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)

■ THIRD CATEGORY

3. Yogesh B. Choksi, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)

NIRUPAN COMPETITION SAHAJANAND (VILLAGE)

■ FIRST CATEGORY

1. Akshar H. Patel, Bochasan (Yuva)
2. Tushar S. Patel, Olpaad (Yuva)

■ SECOND CATEGORY

3. Samir M. Variya, Ranoli

NIRUPAN COMPETITION NILKANTH (VILLAGE)

■ FIRST CATEGORY

1. Akshar D. Chauhan, Radhu

■ SECOND CATEGORY

2. Pinakin M. Patel, Bochasan (Yuva)
3. Yash N. Prajapati, Ankleshwar (Yuva)

GYAN PRASHNOTTARI SAHAJANAND (CITY)

■ FIRST CATEGORY

1. Pragadh Gokani, Vadodara 1 (Yuva)
2. Abhishek Rathod, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
3. Suresh Varsani, Surat (Chhatralaya)
4. Mehul Sarothiya, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
5. Chintan Thakor, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
6. Parth Mangukiya, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
7. Sanjay Prajapati, Surat (Chhatralaya)
8. Pavan Adeshra, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
9. Tilak Ramani, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
10. Akash Patel, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
11. Manish S. Solanki, Vadodara 1 (Yuva)
12. Nikunj Avaiya, Surat (Chhatralaya)
13. Amit Pokar, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
14. Manan Thakar, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
15. Nevilsinh Rathod, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
16. Mehul Gopani, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)

■ SECOND CATEGORY

17. Gaurang Bhadani, Rajkot (Chhatralaya)
18. Mehul Gabani, Rajkot (Chhatralaya)
19. Chirag Makwana, Jamnagar 2
20. Anil Ahir, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
21. Divyang K. Patel, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
22. Kaushal Patel, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
23. Yogesh L. Pipaliya, Surat 1 (Yuva)
24. Ghanshyam Kuvadiya, Bhavnagar 2 (Yuva)
25. Shivam Dave, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
26. Rudresh R. Raval, Atladara (Chhatralaya)
27. Bhadresh Italiya, Surat (Chhatralaya)
28. Ashvin B. Mavani, Surat 1 (Yuva)

■ THIRD CATEGORY

29. Kirtan Zhala, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
30. Pragnesh Desai, Rajkot (Chhatralaya)
31. Maulik Chudasma, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
32. Shailesh R. Haripara, Surat 1 (Yuva)
33. Birju Vachhani, Surat (Chhatralaya)
34. Dilip Sanethiya, Rajkot (Yuva)
35. Sagar Vaghani, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
36. Bharat Bokha, Ahmedabad 1 (Yuva)

37. Bipin Patel, Ahmedabad 1 (Yuva)
38. Mayur Patel, Nadiad (Chhatralaya)
39. Gautam Asundara, Surat (Chhatralaya)
40. Vijay Chheta, Surat (Chhatralaya)

JNAN PRASHNOTTARI NILKANTH VRUND (CITY)

- **FIRST CATEGORY**
 1. Bharat Changani, Rajkot (Yuva)
 2. Raviraj L. Narola, Surat 1 (Yuva)
 3. Uttam Madhani, Gondal (Chhatralaya)
- **SECOND CATEGORY**
 4. Vandan Prajapati, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
 5. Rohit B. Jani, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
 6. Ankit Yadav, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
 7. Nirdesh V. Madhani, Vadodara 1 (Yuva)
 8. Yogesh M. Ambalia, Surat 1 (Yuva)
 9. Devang Chavda, Rajkot (Yuva)
 10. Umang Suthar, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)
 11. Kishan Patel, Surat (Chhatralaya)
 12. Indra Patel, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)
 13. Hardik Pitroda, Gondal (Chhatralaya)
 14. Vandan Gor, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)
 15. Mihir B. Tangadia, Surat 1 (Yuva)
- **THIRD CATEGORY**
 16. Nikunj Kayada, Gondal (Chhatralaya)
 17. Nayan G. Suthar, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
 18. Nilkanth Suthar, Bhavnagar 1 (Yuva)
 19. Parth Vora, Gondal (Chhatralaya)
 20. Bhaumik Limbachiya, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)
 21. Anand R. Patel, Vadodara 1 (Yuva)
 22. Chandrakant Vaghela, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
 23. Anshul B. Patel, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)

JNAN PRASHNOTTARI SAHAJANAND VRUND (VILLAGE)

- **FIRST CATEGORY**
 1. Dhru G. Golakiya, Palitana
 2. Harikrushna D. Luhar, Amreli (Yuva)
 3. Dharmik Thakkar, Radhu
 4. Samir M. Variya, Ranoli
- **SECOND CATEGORY**
 5. Manish B. Delada, Kim (Yuva)
 6. Pritesh P. Devada, Ukai
 7. Mukesh Varmora, Surendranagar
 8. Uttam R. Desai, Jetpur
 9. Tejas R. Patel, Olpaad (Yuva)
 10. Brijesh Patel, Ghanna (Yuva)
- **THIRD CATEGORY**
 11. Akash M. Patel, Boriyavi (Yuva)
 12. Yogesh Rajyaguru, Porbandar
 13. Kaushal J. Patel, Porda
 14. Nil A. Patel, Petlad
 15. Darpan J. Shah, Dhuvaran (Yuva)

16. Dipten B. Patel, Dabhan (Yuva)

JNAN PRASHNOTTARI NILKANTH VRUND (VILLAGE)

- **FIRST CATEGORY**
 1. Dhruvkumar S. Patel, Porda
 2. Vivek A. Tandel, Ukai
 3. Mayank J. Joshi, Limdi
 4. Vishal V. Patel, Radhu
- **SECOND CATEGORY**
 5. Vandan S. Ranpurwala, Vanakbori
 6. Satish V. Gamit, Ukai
 7. Hitesh K. Prajapati, Kathlal
 8. Ronak N. Patel, Tarapore (Yuva)
 9. Pankaj P. Vadchhak, Botad
- **THIRD CATEGORY**
 10. Naresh Shinghadiya, Porbandar
 11. Rahul D. Chauhan, Amreli (Yuva)
 12. Bhavik D. Soni, Jalsan (Yuva)
 13. Ujwal G. Bhatt, Vidyanagar (Yuva)
 14. Chetan J. Machhi, Dhavat

ESSAY COMPETITION: SAHAJANAND VRUND (CITY)

- **FIRST CATEGORY**
 1. Hiren Mavani, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
 2. Kivyes Patel, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
 3. Harikrushna Vasani, Pune
 4. Nikunj Avaiya, Surat (Chhatralaya)
 5. Kunal Solanki, Jamnagar 2
- **SECOND CATEGORY**
 6. Umang Gabani, Surat 1 (Yuva)
 7. Manish S. Solanki, Vadodara 1 (Yuva)
 8. Harikrushna Dobariya, Bhavnagar 2 (Yuva)
 9. Yogesh J. Vinchi, Surat 2 (Yuva)
 10. Keval Shethwala, Ahmedabad 1 (Yuva)
 11. Mayank N. Ajugiya, Mumbai 1 (Yuva)
 12. Riddhish Baldha, Rajkot (Chhatralaya)
- **THIRD CATEGORY**
 13. Dhruv Chauhan, Ahmedabad 2 (Yuva)
 14. Minesh Darji, Ahmedabad 1 (Yuva)
 15. Vishesh Modi, Ahmedabad 3 (Yuva)

ESSAY COMPETITION: NILKANTH VRUND (CITY)

- **FIRST CATEGORY**
 1. Vishal Patel, Vidyanagar (Chhatralaya)
 2. Arjun D. Panchal, Anand (Yuva)
- **SECOND CATEGORY**
 3. Yagnesh R. Patel, Mumbai 2 (Yuva)
 4. Parth Vora, Gondal (Chhatralaya)
- **THIRD CATEGORY**
 5. Keval Patel, Gondal (Chhatralaya)

ESSAY COMPETITION SAHAJANAND VRUND (VILLAGE)

- **FIRST CATEGORY**
 1. Uttam R. Desai, Jetpur

2. Arjun M. Gohil, Talaja
- **SECOND CATEGORY**
 3. Dipgaal N. Vaghela, Gavasad
 4. Uttkarsh S. Suthar, Umreth
- **THIRD CATEGORY**
 5. Tushar B. Prajapati, Vidyanagar

ESSAY COMPETITION: NILKANTH VRUND (VILLAGE)

- **FIRST CATEGORY**
 1. Dipak D. Tandel, Tithal
- **SECOND CATEGORY**
 2. Radhik K. Patel, Boriyavi
 3. Niraj H. Thakar, Amreli
- **THIRD CATEGORY**
 4. Vishal V. Patel, Radhu

SKIT COMPETITION

- **FIRST CATEGORY**
 1. Goregaun Yuvak Mandal, Mumbai
 2. Nalasopara Yuvak Mandal, Mumbai
 3. Mira Road Yuvak Mandal, Mumbai
- **SECOND CATEGORY**
 4. Local Yuval Mandal, Mumbai 1
 5. BAPS Chhatralaya, Nadiad
 6. BAPS Chhatralaya (Mandal 2), Vidyanagar
- **THIRD CATEGORY**
 7. BAPS Chhatralaya, Surat
 8. Ashadip, Surat 1

CHORUS KIRTAN COMPETITION (CITY)

- **FIRST CATEGORY**
 1. Manjalpur Yuvak Mandal, Vadodara 2
 2. BAPS Chhatralaya (Mandal 2), Vidyanagar
 3. Bapunagar Yuvak Mandal, Ahmedabad 1
- **SECOND CATEGORY**
 4. Malad East Yuvak Mandal, Mumbai 2
 5. Satellite Yuvak Mandal, Ahmedabad 2
 6. Hill Drive Yuvak Mandal, Bhavnagar 1
- **THIRD CATEGORY**
 7. BAPS Chhatralaya (Mandal 1), Vidyanagar
 8. Smruti Mandir Yuvak Mandal, Nadiad

CHORUS KIRTAN COMPETITION (VILLAGE)

- **FIRST CATEGORY**
 1. Borsad Yuvak Mandal, Bocharan
- **SECOND CATEGORY**
 2. Kanjari Yuvak Mandal, Boriyavi
- **THIRD CATEGORY**
 3. Bocharan Yuvak Mandal, Bocharan
 4. Khaparvada Yuvak Mandal, Dharasana

“O YOUTHS!

Through You the Legacy of Satsang Will Continue.”

A translation of excerpts of Yogiji Maharaj's letters inspiring youths to do satsang activities and participate in adhiveshans (spiritual conventions).

Rarely would anyone imagine that Yogiji Maharaj, seated in an ordinary mud hut and writing on a letterpad resting on his thigh, would be showering his compassion and grace for the liberation of all.

The 1930s in India were the tumultuous years of the Independence struggle. On the other hand, the diminutive BAPS Sanstha was tottering and steadying itself amidst a hurricane of obstacles. During the 1940s and 50s, Yogiji Maharaj gave a clarion call of spirituality to youths.

He established the BAPS Youth Organization (Yuvak Mandal) in Mumbai in 1952 with the dream that youths will foster the Vedic philosophy of Akshar-Purushottam propagated by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Yogiji Maharaj inspired Youth Conventions (adhiveshans) in India and abroad to bring out the talents and potential in youths. His letters motivated them for character-building, faith and service to God. Such was the spirit of those letters that no youth would remain hesitant and lethargic. Here is a sample of some of those invigorating letters he wrote from the tiny villages of Gujarat to youths residing in East Africa and cities throughout India. His letters inspired and prepared them to participate in many youth conventions that followed.

1.11.1956, KHANDLI

Respected Shri Nairobi, a very auspicious place, the most pious, *param ekantik*, the favoured of Swami-Shriji and Shastriji Maharaj, morally staunch, the whole Yuvak Mandal of Africa, may Swami-Shriji forever keep it soaring.

Read the heartfelt Jai Swaminarayan from Sadhu Jnanjivandas, Mota Swami, Narayan Swami and Motibhai, Veljibhai of Jinja, Harmanbhai and Ranchhodbhai of Vadi and others.

With blessings I write with great joy. My profound blessings for the Youth Convention to be held in Africa. O *yuvak mandals* (youth forums), prepare yourselves! The legacy of Swami-Shriji and Shastriji Maharaj will be upheld through the *yuvak mandals*. Hence, be in strong spirits.

1. Live according to moral disciplines, apply *tilak-chandlo* and obey the Shikshapatri; so that others will think good of us and think 'Oh, the Swaminarayan Yuvak Mandal behave spotlessly.' And with this they will think that how supremely behaved their mother and father, guru and devotees must be. Such deep impressions and effect they will have. Therefore, O youths, get ready and be prepared. Be intelligent in your

studies. I specially request you not to ever fail in your exams. May you achieve success.

2. Believe one's *atma* to be *brahmarup*. *Brahmarup* means *gunatit* – that is to behave above the states of gross, subtle and causal. Abide by shlok 116 of the Shikshapatri. All should make efforts to learn it. This convention is the first ever. Now it will resound with success.

3. For three days, 23, 24 and 25, I will do *mala* in India, so that the convention is accomplished without any obstacles. May its success resound in the whole of Nairobi. All shall praise, and say, 'Oh, wonderful Swaminarayan Yuvak Mandal.' There will be victory calls hailed.

4. Wonderful! The convention will be a great success. Now, if possible, hold such a convention every year during the Christmas holidays. One in Nairobi, the next in Mombasa, then Tororo, Kampala and other places. When the youths of each city see it, they will gain spiritual knowledge.

5. There is only one motive to hold such conventions (*adhiveshans*): that youths develop single faith, dharma, *jnan*, *vairagya* and bhakti. Then youths will not fall into bad influences, and shall obey their parents. One who doesn't lose himself in today's material age will happily follow dharma, pursue studies, give up vices and addictions and become courageous. These are our motives.

6. Another purpose for holding conventions is to foster harmony (*samp*) and brotherhood (*suhradaybhav*). Believe that you are all the sons of one father – Swaminarayan Bhagwan. Gunatit Swami and Maharaj are our parents. Then *maya* will go away and day by day *divyabhav* will develop.

On holidays, send youths to travel to villages – to share knowledge, say Vatos, sleep on the floor and bathe in cold water... May students get up at 5.00 a.m. and at night do their homework and sleep at 10.30 p.m. Never get angry. While walking outside (on the streets) may youths keep their eyes downwards and remember the *murti* of Maharaj. Take a pledge to never speak untruth even at the cost of one's life.

7. The convention will be a great success. May the youths in India also do likewise. We are preparing the youths in India similarly.

8. You have the blessings of Swami-Shriji and Shastriji Maharaj for the convention. Organize such conventions every year. You have my blessings to train at least 5,000 youths in Africa.

9. Dearest to Swami, those who will support youths and help them, Shriji Maharaj and Shastriji Maharaj will liberate them and place them in their service. They will forever experience inner peace. Senior devotees, who will sponsor meals for youths, help them and give aid to the poor for their studies will benefit greatly and at-

tain Maharaj.

Say the Jai of Swaminarayan, Jai of Mul Akshar Swami, Jai of Swami Jaga Swami, Jai of Bhagatji Maharaj, Jai of Krishnaji Ada, Jai of Swami Shastriji Maharaj,... *jai, jai, jai, jai* and forever *jai* of small and great devotees of Africa and youths associated with Swami.

Loving Jai Swaminarayan of Servant
Sadhu Jnanjivandas

Enclosed herewith are rose petals of Akshar Deri. After offering food to Thakorji put a petal each in all the food prepared for the convention. This will sanctify the food. Whoever eats will be strengthened (internally).

2.3.58, VARNAMA

Now the principle words: share *brahmagnan* (divine knowledge with all youths), talk about God with form (*sakar*) and that he is supreme. Now the youths are active. They are eager to attain *moksha*. Twenty-eight years ago when I was making efforts no youths were eager. To the contrary, they were critical. This, one could observe from village to village. Before Swamishri (Shastriji Maharaj) left for Dham I had taken his blessings and asked that may you so bless that youths become *satsangis*. Due to his blessings one finds the change in youths today. Otherwise, collegians and school-goers did not believe. But now one finds sentiments of dharma in their lives.

Gunatitanand Swami had stated in Junagadh, 'I have taught *brahmavidya* to 200 youths.' Swami had said these words to Jaga Swami. It is because of that power that there is a change among youths. Now, no youth criticizes. The time to act has arrived. If we are not active then the occasion will pass. Therefore inspire the colour of faith in all colleges and schools.

In three years 5,001 youths will get ready in knowledge, dharma and bhakti by Maharaj's powers. How great is Maharaj's grace when pure

gems emerge in the midst of a country where addictions prevail. Look at Mahendrabhai and Meghani of London, how awakened they are. Those who criticized Swaminarayan, the same youths have put on *kanthis* and are doing *tilak-chandlo* and puja. O, what an atmosphere prevails!

So, now the time has come. May the youths get ready to attain glory. It is Swami Shastriji Maharaj's blessings and they will surely bear fruits. So try to increase the number of such youths. Say the *jai* of Sahajanand. Say the *jai* of the Yuvak Mandal *bhaktas*.

Jai Swaminarayan from
Your Servant
Sadhu Jnanjivandas

22.10.59, KAPOLVADI, PANJRAPOL GALI, MUMBAI

Now may you youths get ready. May the youths of the country get ready. Be courageous in *agna*, *upasana*, *sadbhav* and *paksha*. Whoever comes in touch with you talk about the (divine) knowledge and dharma. Have *nirdosh buddhi*. I have understood your glory so much that I believe you are all (wedded) to *brahmavidya* and that is why you have such faith. So, do not allow bad company to mix with your past merits. Have (spiritual) strength of Maharaj and Swami. Youths who are studying should read for eight hours. Do not lapse in that. I strongly request to never ever fail in your studies. If any youth fails or does not get good results then Swami-Shriji's *rajipo* will diminish. Therefore keep your eyes on the goal. In the remaining time engage yourself in *katha-varta*. Attend the *sabha* on Sunday. Increase the attendance of youths. If you so will, and with Swami-Shriji's inspiration, many youths beyond your expectations will attain *ekantik dharma*. Swami-Shriji and Shastriji Maharaj will reside in you, and you will be so charged that you will inspire others to become *ekantik*. These are my heartfelt blessings on

New Year's Day. This is my request, so may you take it to heart. Be spirited and do not weaken. Maharaj and Swami will inspire strength (in you). May you fulfil this wish of mine.

Jai Shri Swaminarayan
Servant Sadhu Jnanjivandas

14.6.60, SHRAVAN VADI 8, JANMASHTMI.

A BIG DAY OF AUSTERITY, SUNDAY 5.30 P.M.,
ON BILIMORA-MUMBAI TRAIN

O senior devotees, these instructions are for you all. Allow your children to go to the Sunday *sabha*. In future, these youths will increase Satsang. Youths having character will impress others. If they attend the Sunday *sabha* they will develop character. Therefore all parents should send their children to the Sunday *sabha*. Only then they will become good. In two years, a convention of 5,000 youths will be held in Africa. Make such efforts with unity, harmony and fraternity. In that Swami-Shriji and Shastriji Maharaj are extremely pleased.

JANUARY, 1971, GONDAL

The Youth Convention will be held in May 1971, Gondal. The youths will be tested for Vatos, kirtans, Vachanamruts and others. They will be awarded prizes and badges. The sadhus become alert and ready to prepare (them) from right now. Twenty-thousand youths must participate. May the London newspapers cover the convention, saying it is supreme. At this supreme *gunatit* place all should get ready. Keep Shastriji Maharaj, our guru, in the forefront of all activities. A supreme convention should take place. It is vacation time in May, thus the youths should arrive prepared. The convention should be the best and supreme. When others have the enthusiasm and joy that I have for the convention, it will turn out to be supreme.

With Loving Jai Swaminarayan
Servant Sadhu Jnanjivandas





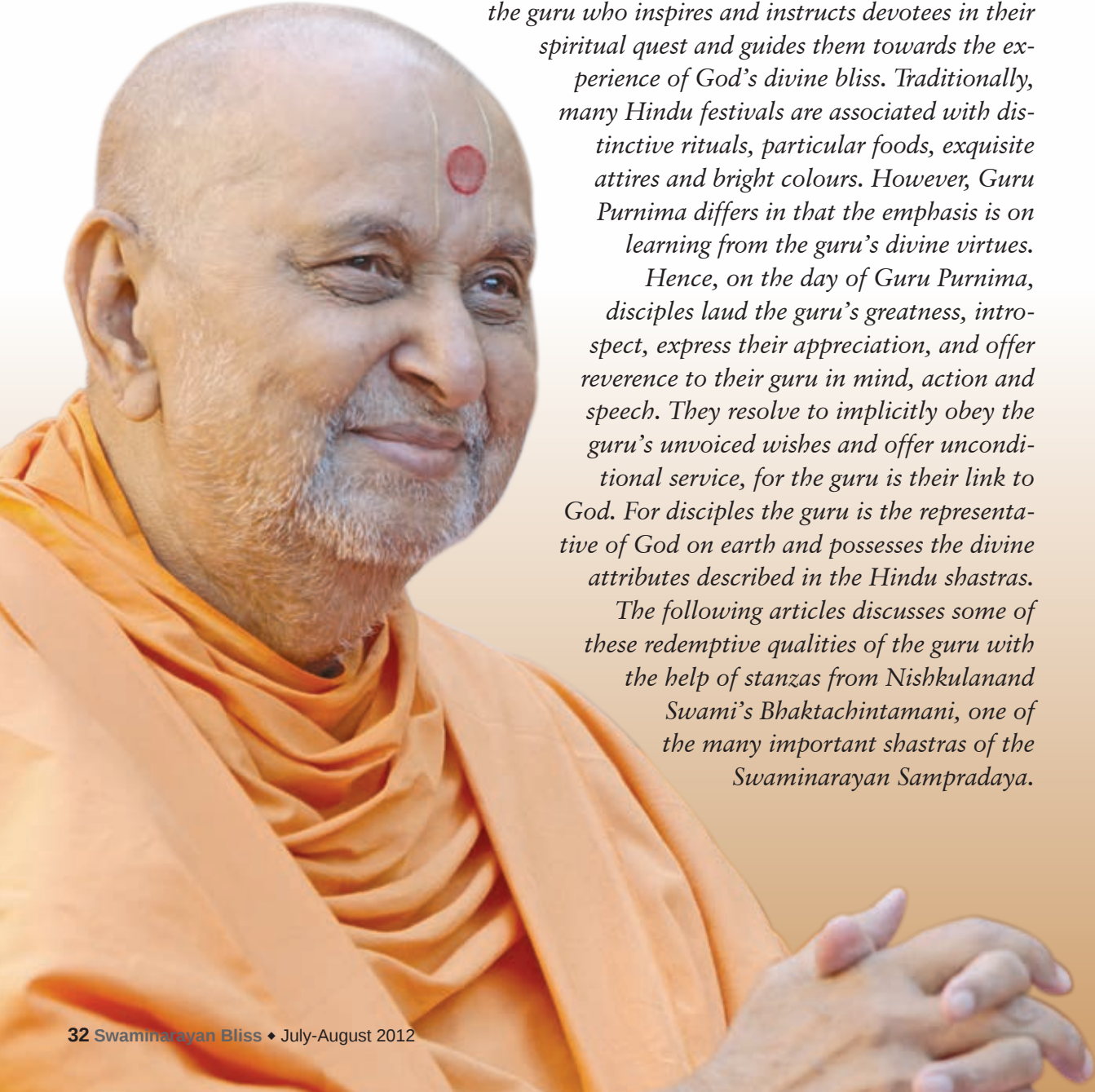
GURU PURNIMA

Honouring the Guru

Guru Purnima is a special occasion for all Hindus since it is a time to honour one's spiritual master. It is the guru who inspires and instructs devotees in their spiritual quest and guides them towards the experience of God's divine bliss. Traditionally, many Hindu festivals are associated with distinctive rituals, particular foods, exquisite attires and bright colours. However, Guru Purnima differs in that the emphasis is on learning from the guru's divine virtues.

Hence, on the day of Guru Purnima, disciples laud the guru's greatness, introspect, express their appreciation, and offer reverence to their guru in mind, action and speech. They resolve to implicitly obey the guru's unvoiced wishes and offer unconditional service, for the guru is their link to God. For disciples the guru is the representative of God on earth and possesses the divine attributes described in the Hindu shastras.

The following articles discusses some of these redemptive qualities of the guru with the help of stanzas from Nishkulanand Swami's Bhaktachintamani, one of the many important shastras of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya.



Ocean of Virtues

THE BHAKTACHINTAMANI

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami was a distinguished *paramhansa* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He was born in the village of Shekhpat in Gujarat and was considered illiterate throughout the early part of his life. However, by Bhagwan Swaminarayan's grace he developed unparalleled skill to compose verse and was widely acclaimed as a poetic genius. He wrote the Bhaktachintamani, one of his many works, in Gujarati, chiefly employing the famous *chopai* stanza form. This shastra comprises 164 chapters and besides depicting the life and times of Shriji Maharaj, the poet has vividly described the celebration of the Holi and Annakut festivals. He has described in detail the places visited by Shriji Maharaj and has given a list of eminent devotees along with the names of their respective towns and villages.

The second chapter of the Bhaktachintamani pays homage to the ideal Sadhu, the manifest Gunatit Guru, whom Bhagwan Swaminarayan has repeatedly praised throughout the Vachanamrut. Hence, through this chapter we can better understand the divine glory of our guru, Pramukh Swami Maharaj. This chapter is also one of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's favourite chapters of the Bhaktachintamani, since it serves as a benchmark for disciples in identifying a true guru who will lead one to God.

GURU: OCEAN OF VIRTUES

Nishkulanand Swami pays homage to the virtuous Gunatit Sadhu:

*“Sadgunanā sindhu gambhir,
sthirmati atishay dheer;
Mān abhimān nahi lesh,
eva Santne nāmu hu sheesh.”*

“I bow down to the Sadhu who is an ocean of virtues, equipoised and without the slightest trace of arrogance.”

SADGUNANĀ SINDHU GAMBHIR

Nishkulanand Swami describes the Sadhu as an ocean of virtues. The more one tries to understand each virtue of the Sadhu, the more enchanting and vast each one becomes.

In 2004, Prabhashankar Pandya, a devotee from Shastriji Maharaj's time recounted an incident that he had witnessed, “Shastriji Maharaj was in Atladra. Arjunbhai Mistry was discussing the design of the front gate of the Sarangpur mandir. Motibhai was standing right next to him. Shastriji Maharaj pointed at Motibhai and asked Arjunbhai if he knew him. Before he could answer, he introduced him as the father of Narayanswarup Swami. Shastriji Maharaj said, ‘He has given me his virtuous son. I am forever indebted to him.’”

The Shrimad Bhagavat Puran lists these virtues¹ in a conversation between Pruthvi (Mother Earth) and Dharma. The shastras also state that a sadhu whose life exemplifies these virtues is an ideal Sadhu and is worthy of reverence on par with God.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj possesses not only these divine virtues, but also a host of qualities which appeal to people of different inclinations.

1. The virtues are: truth, purity, compassion, forgiveness, renunciation, contentment, simplicity, mental control, sensory control, austerity, equality, tolerance, worldly disinterest, scriptural obedience, experiential knowledge, detachment, power, courage, illustrious personality, vigour, remembrance, independence, skill, beauty, patience, kindheartedness, maturity, love, integrity, endurance, radiance, strength, lordship, profundity, mental stability, faith in God, fame, worthy of reverence, humility. – *Shrimad Bhagavat Puran* 1.16.26-28.

Businessmen are awed by his management, leaders by his leadership, diplomats by his tact, doctors by his compassion, social activists by his integrity, spiritual leaders by his wisdom and mental stability, photographers by his beauty, reporters by his maturity, teachers by his lessons, motivational speakers by his enthusiasm, philosophers by his depth, kings by his lordship, army officials by his discipline, architects by his ornate detailing, children by his innocence, parents by his parenting, aristocrats by his decorum and paupers by his accessibility. But, most of all, everyone who knows Pramukh Swami Maharaj is swept over by his humility and faith in God.

Among this vast ocean of virtues, Nishkulanand Swami has described two pearls that he wished to highlight in the stanza above. Let us see each one in turn.

STHIRMATI ATISHAY DHEER

Sthir means to be poised. To understand what this means, let us first look at the opposite. What disturbs an individual? What causes mental turmoil?

According to Vachanamrut Gadhada I 18, disturbances of the mind are caused by attachment to *vishays* (worldly pleasures). An enchanting sight, an enticing smell, an enjoyable song and other such enjoyments can change the way a person thinks and acts. They can change the course of a person's life. The rollercoaster of instant sensual gratification has derailed many. This is what disturbs an individual.

It is well noted that with the passing of time, our weakness for worldly comforts increases. People tend to desire more comforts and become attached to worldly objects. Yet, not for one who is of stable mind (*sthirmati*), like Swamishri.

Whether he is travelling in remote villages to uplift tribal villagers, or travelling around the cities of India or travelling around the western world; whether he is meeting businessmen, dignitaries, politicians, religious figures, or meeting

the common man, his mental stability is uniform. He interacts with everyone with the same loving attitude. Swamishri could be participating calmly in a United Nations Peace Conference talking about world peace and still maintain the same composure when his own temple is being attacked by terrorists. Swamishri is able to bring peace and comfort to the chronically ill and still maintain the same equanimity when being told he must have an emergency quadruple bypass operation. He is able to remain equipoised in both praise and prejudice.

On 24 April 1995, Swamishri was in Surat meeting hundreds of devotees. A 78-year-old devotee grabbed everyone's attention.

"I want to file a complaint!" he announced.

"What's the matter?" Swamishri asked.

"Why did God take my wife before me?"

"Isn't it a good thing that she is in Akshardham? Plus, she didn't have to live a single day without you. It is her great fortune."

"When she was on her deathbed in the hospital, she wanted to see me for the last time, but she passed away before I got there. It's your fault. You should have let her live for just a little bit longer."

The senior's voice began to rise in both emotion and decibels, yet Pramukh Swami remained completely poised and unfazed. He continued, "They even delay an execution for a final death wish. This is your fault. You should have granted her this one wish."

"She was a true devotee. All her wishes were granted and now she is in Akshardham," Swamishri reasoned calmly.

"I am going to go too."

"Perfect. Then you will meet her."

"Not really. I am not going to be able to recognize her there. Why did you take her early?"

Everyone standing around was getting agitated, but Swamishri patiently consoled him.

"It is better that your wife went to Akshardham first. She didn't have to see a single

day as a widow... It would have been harder on your wife, if it were the other way around..."

In the face of such unreasonable accusations, any other person might have understandably displayed some sort of negative disposition. However, Pramukh Swami Maharaj did not. Instead he remained calm. He affectionately blessed the old devotee and remained undisturbed by his irrational accusations.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj has met some of the world's most influential people in different fields. He is the administrative president of an international organization and is the spiritual ideal for us all. He has had a lot to deal with and has remained equipoised at all times.

It is one thing to remain composed in insult and another to do so in times of chaos. Swamishri has mastered both effortlessly.

In New Delhi in 2005 the Swaminarayan Akshardham monument was under construction and tonnes of stones were sprawled throughout the 100-acre complex. The entire complex was littered with floor tiles, cotta stones, marble, limestone and pink stone. Hundreds of stone-masons were busy chiselling away and the wailing of their saws rang throughout the complex. Seeing this chaos, sadhus of the team managing the work approached Swamishri and described the havoc. They reported, "Everywhere we look, we see deadlines, pending work, and tonnes and tonnes of unassembled stones! Aren't you worried?"

Swamishri replied, nonchalantly, "There may be tonnes of stones outside, but I do not feel a pebble's amount of weight on my chest."

It goes without saying that Pramukh Swami Maharaj's *sthirmati* has enamoured those who have come in contact with him. It is one among many of the qualities that makes him so awe-inspiring and captivating. These qualities merely open the doors of attachment, but it is his humility that keeps these doors open.

MĀN ABHIMĀN NAHI LESH...

The Sanskrit word *anahamkrutihi* means the absence of ego. Pramukh Swami is polite and simple, natural and open. He has never craved or expected accolades. Let us look at his worldly achievements in order to comprehend the extent of his absence of ego.

Swamishri has created hundreds of magnificent mandirs and monuments around the world. He has contributed to society through anti-addiction campaigns, tribal care programmes, women's uplift programmes and disaster relief operations. He has sanctified the mansions, bungalows, apartments, condos, shanties and huts of thousands of devotees and wellwishers. Swamishri has educated thousands of children through hostels, boarding schools and education drives. He has initiated over 850 sadhus, who have renounced their personal ambitions to serve God and society. Swamishri has been honoured every day of the week for the past 42 years!

Despite all of this, whenever he is asked by a dignitary or even the common man about his accomplishments his answer is the same, "It is all due to the grace of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and my gurus."

Dipak Jhaveri, a reporter for *India Post* in the United States, interviewed Swamishri. He asked, "Don't you ever tire from the constant travel and your organization's growth?"

Pramukh Swami replied, "It is God's work. I don't believe that I am doing anything. It is all due to my guru's blessings and God's inspiration. You only feel the burden on your head if you try to carry a pot of water. If you swim in the ocean, thousands of gallons of water are above your head, but you don't feel a thing. Similarly, you should always pray to God saying, 'You are doing everything. I am merely an instrument.' He will guide us through success and failure. If you work in a way that pleases him, you will produce results that please everyone."

(Contd. on pg. 43)

Completely Aloof, Yet Deeply Involved



*“Sāri sundar kathā kahe chhe,
Alubdhādi ātmā rahe chhe,
Vali pardukh hare hamesh,
Evā Santane nāmu hu shish.”*

- Bhaktachintamani 2.19

“He always speaks about God,
Acting as the *atma*, he remains aloof from everything;
Yet dissolves everyone’s miseries,
I bow my head to such a Sadhu.”

In this couplet, Nishkulanand Swami describes that the Gunatit Sadhu has total detachment towards his body and the material world. However, while he has no concern for his own needs, he actively endeavours to relieve the suffering of others.

ULTIMATE DETACHMENT

“If you become the prime minister [of India], then I will become the finance minister,” Bhagwatcharan Swami said to Swamishri in Nairobi in 1988.

“Everything is perishable,” Swamishri reacted. “This world itself is perishable. The type of joy derived from God’s worship and chanting the *mala* cannot be found elsewhere.”

Swamishri is the embodiment of ultimate *vairagya*, detachment from everything besides God, and aloofness from the world. Nothing on this planet, natural or man-made, can bind Swamishri. His enlightenment and experience of God are eternal. For him the “taste” of God’s bliss makes the world insignificant. Swamishri views the world from this detached state.

During a visit to the Niagara Falls in 1974, sadhus and devotees travelling with Swamishri enjoyed the splendour of the falls illuminated by coloured lights at night. Swamishri smiled at them. Despite not being fascinated by this impressive sight, Swamishri revealed his lifelong preference, “I acquire more happiness in bhajan [worship] than in seeing new things,” Swamishri declared. “The whole world enjoys the joy of the material world, but only a few derive happiness from bhajan.” Since Swamishri genuinely enjoys the practise of bhajan, small and large objects of this world become unimportant.

Once, in London, Swamishri entered a store for *padhramani*. The storeowner casually asked him whether he liked the shop. “What is there to like in it?” Swamishri questioned. “Everything is made of dust!”

What an unexpected response! To him this applies not only to items on a store shelf but for everything in this world.

Several years ago, Swamishri was having lunch in Jamnagar. Bhagwatcharan Swami, after having inspected the building they were to lodge at, expressed his approval of the location to Swamishri. He then asked Swamishri to convey his opinion. “Everything is the same to me,” Swamishri said. Then Swamishri added with indifference, “What is a *bangla* [bungalow] and what is a *bangli*?”

This state of spiritual equilibrium allows Swamishri to rise above his personal comfort, and as a result, he can swiftly adjust to any environment.

“For us, we are always *tushtā*, *tushtā*, and *tushtā* [content, content, and content],” Swamishri said this for himself in Delhi in November 2005. “Therefore, we are never bothered. Wherever they ask us to sit, we sit. Whether there is a chair or not; if the whole planet is your home, who can kick you out?”

Swamishri’s contentment allows him to remain unmoved by even the direst circumstances. He even fearlessly faces dangerous circumstances.

In April 2006, a slight tremor was felt in Sarangpur. The following day, sadhus asked Raghu Bharvad whether he experienced the earthquake. “I didn’t feel anything,” Raghu replied.

“How can you have known, if you fall asleep while remembering God?” Swamishri asked. “Whatever is going to happen will happen with God’s will.”

An even more difficult thing is to remain indifferent about one’s appearance in public, or what sociologists term ‘front stage management’. We are conscious about what others think of us or whether we fit the social mainstream (a possible reason why some are hesitant to do *tilak-chandlo* at school or work). That awareness makes us uneasy and drives us to behave in certain ways when in public.

Swamishri’s detachment makes him an exception to this.

In November 2010, Swamishri was in a rush to go to a festival assembly. Because Swamishri was seated in his wheelchair, he felt it was unnecessary for him to put on his footwear. Even then, Nirbhayswarup Swami told Swamishri that without his footwear something felt missing.

“It would look nice if you wore your slippers,” Brahmavihari Swami added. “You should stay tip-top.”

“We should not worry about looking tip-top,” Swamishri responded. “We should stay the way God wants to keep us and do bhajan. We will fail in life if we try to be tip-top.”

For Swamishri front stage management comes from within. This not only allows him to remain indifferent to appearance, but also to the state of his own body.

Around 1981, a tumour began to develop in Swamishri’s right thigh. Even though the pain persisted continuously, Swamishri did not mention it to anyone for over five years! Only after the tumour became large was it noticed by his attendants. The operation was finally performed in 1986.

For Swamishri it is natural to never mention his physical difficulties, irrespective of the condition’s severity. He remains silent, even if it means forsaking his own health.

Once, in Philadelphia, in 1980, Swamishri stuck his right foot into his left *mojdi*, and left foot into his right *mojdi*. Surprised and worried, the attendant sadhus questioned Swamishri about his unusual action.

Swamishri disclosed that his vision had become blurred. Doctors investigated and found that he had developed cataracts in his eyes and, unless urgent action was taken, he was in danger of losing his vision. The attendant sadhus asked Swamishri why he had remained silent about such a critical problem. His response revealed his concern for others even at the cost

of his own health. Swamishri disclosed that he did not want to disrupt the devotees' schedule, especially because they had taken time off from work and school.

Swamishri is simply indifferent to concerns of his body. On 4 July 2011 in Bharuch, the doctor routinely took Swamishri's blood pressure at around 10 p.m., just before Swamishri retired for sleep. The reading was abnormal; so, the attendant sadhus asked Swamishri if he felt alright. Swamishri then revealed that he had felt chest pains for the past few hours.

Swamishri stayed awake all night and endured the increasing pain until early the next morning. Witnesses to the event declared that throughout the ordeal Swamishri's face did not once squint in pain! Had it not been for the routine testing, Swamishri might never have revealed his chest pains. Even more astonishing is that Swamishri insisted on going for Thakorji's darshan in the main mandir the next morning, even though the doctors had insisted on strict bed rest. The attendant sadhus were left with no choice but to comply with Swamishri's resolve.

THE DILEMMA

For Swamishri the concerns of the world seem irrelevant. For someone whose attachment and devotion to God are unparalleled, who sees the world and thinks of it as nothing but dust, who views all things equally and is content in all circumstances, who does not care about personal appearance and pays no attention to his body, it seems only natural that such a person would not care much about anyone or anything in this world? After all, as Swamishri once explained in Nairobi in 1988, "You forget God when you fall into other people's business and problems."

Nevertheless, his life seems to tell a very different story. Contradictory to his worldly detachment, Swamishri's genuine care for people is tremendous.

PROFOUND INTEREST

On 25 June 2006 in Ahmedabad, Swamishri had just concluded his blessings when a small, unknown child came crying to Swamishri. The child and his mother had recently been forced out of their home by the child's father because of a recent clash between his parents. They temporarily stayed at the home of the child's uncle. However, the uncle now felt that both were a burden to his family and eventually drove them out of his home as well.

The child and his mother had nowhere or no one to turn to. Their final resort was Swamishri. The child stirred up some courage to narrate his dire situation. Amid thousands of people, Swamishri compassionately listened to the unfortunate account as he gently caressed the child's head.

"Find out exactly what the problem is," Swamishri instructed a sadhu. "Make sure the child receives a good education and help them out in any way they need." Swamishri's concern gifted the child with a hopeful future.

His ability to delve equally deep into the lives of children, regardless of their socio-economic and cultural standing, is quite remarkable. Swamishri's concern even touches the finest details of their everyday welfare.

Swamishri once visited Ukai in South Gujarat where BAPS operates a hostel for tribal children. He asked very detailed questions to the hostel administrators about the children's wellbeing.

"We provide powdered milk every morning," the administrators informed.

"Does everyone like it?" Swamishri asked, quite concerned. "Does everyone drink it?"

"If someone doesn't like it, then they just don't drink it," they responded frankly. Swamishri did not approve of this.

"We should also supply cow or buffalo milk so no one gets left out," Swamishri said. Swamishri then inspected the students' living quarters and closely examined the beds, bed sheets and other

facilities in each room.

Swamishri noticed the rough blankets on each bed. “These blankets are good enough to protect [the children] against the cold,” Swamishri said. “But make sure to have covers made for each blanket so that they don’t rub roughly against the children’s soft cheeks.”

The magnitude of Swamishri’s care and concern positively influences all those around him. His compassion invokes the spirit of impartial and selfless service in his disciples.

In 1974, Swamishri paid a visit to Chandubhai’s residence in London. Chandubhai had invited his English neighbour to his home and introduced him to Swamishri. During their conversation, Swamishri discovered that the Englishman’s son had abandoned him, and that he was passing the rest of his years in despair. Swamishri instructed Chandubhai to take care of his neighbour.

When Swamishri revisited London in 1984, the Englishman came to meet him. Swamishri recognized him straightaway, one decade later! The Englishman had specially come to thank Swamishri because Chandubhai was still looking after him.

It is mind-boggling that someone so concerned about others, and who can inspire the same caring attitude in others, can remain unsympathetic towards his own body. Indifference does not stop him from satisfying others’ needs.

On 5 October 2009, in Gondal, Ramcharan Swami was waiting for Swamishri’s darshan. The previous day, Swamishri himself had asked Dr Kiran Doshi to examine Ramcharan Swami’s backpain and aching legs. Thereafter, Dr Kiran Doshi had arranged for an MRI test. The diagnosis was eventually completed.

“Has the report arrived?” Swamishri asked.

“Yes,” Ramcharan Swami answered.

“The report wasn’t good,” Ramcharan Swami said, “so, Dr Kiran has asked me to come to Mumbai.”

“Make sure you go,” Swamishri instructed.

“Swamishri was worrying about your health last night as well,” Narayancharan Swami added.

“We have to face what’s in our *prarabdh* [destiny],” Ramcharan Swami casually said.

“Both me and you have to face that,” Swamishri said. “But we have to worry, right.” Swamishri suddenly became emotional. Seeing a change of expression on Swamishri’s face, Ramcharan Swami could not contain himself either.

“Bapa! There is no need for you to worry about me so much,” Ramcharan Swami said. “With your grace, everything is just fine.” Hearing this, Swamishri became even more emotional and his voice started quaking.

Swamishri’s nature matches perfectly with what Premanand Swami writes in the sixth stanza of the *Lila Chintamani* (*Chesta*):

“*Koine dukhiyo re, dekhi na khamāy;
Dayā āni re, ati ākalā thāy...*”

“He cannot bear to look at others in pain, and when he does he becomes overwhelmed with compassion, and becomes distressed.”

COEXISTENCE

When Nishkulanand Swami revealed in the Bhaktachintamani that such a *satpurush*, despite remaining aloof from the world, remains concerned with removing others’ miseries, it seems at first that these two qualities conflict. How can a person be both unconcerned and concerned at the same time? However, in Swamishri’s life we see both qualities in perfect harmony. Swamishri remains detached from the pleasures of the world and concerns of his body; yet when it comes to others, Swamishri’s compassion is profound. He is completely aloof, yet deeply involved. Let us join Nishkulanand Swami in prayer by reverently bowing our heads to such a saint – “*Evā Santne nāmu hu shish.*” ♦



Endowed with All Virtues

*“Sanshayhartā ne kalyāṅkartā,
vali Veda Purāṇnā vettā;
Komal vāṇi vāchāl vishesha,
eva Santne nāmu hu shishh...”*

- Bhaktachintamani 18

“Remover of all doubts and granter of liberation, knower of the Vedas and Purans;

Kind and caring speaker, to such a Sadhu I bow my head...”

Once a group of animals got together to develop a school and create a curriculum that included swimming, flying, running and climbing. They decided that all animals would be required to take and pass every subject with flying colours.

Naturally, the duck was the best swimmer in the school. Unfortunately, he was not so great at running. In order to improve his running, the duck had to spend his time practising sprints. Eventually, he injured his feet and was no longer good at swimming.

The rabbit had the opposite problem. He was a great runner, but could not swim to save his life. His failure caused him to go crazy.

The squirrel was hands down the greatest climber of all the animals. He loved soaring down to the ground from the tree branches, but when he was required to fly from the ground up, he pulled a muscle in his side that prevented him from either climbing or running. His overall grades suffered.

Then there was the eagle, who liked nothing better than soaring through the air. However, he insisted on doing things on his own terms, and so he was expelled for being a nonconformist.

In this way each of the animals excelled in one or two subjects, but none could master all of them.

On the spiritual path we see something similar. There are those who have great qualities, but none who have all the spiritual qualities revealed in the shastras. However, Pramukh Swami Maharaj is different. His greatness lies in the fact that he has all of these spiritual qualities.

In the second chapter of the Bhaktachintamani, Nishkulanand Swami has described many of the qualities of a true Sadhu. Among them, we will look at those described in verse eighteen and see how they can be seen in Swamishri's life.

SANSHAYHARTĀ – ABOLISHING OUR DOUBTS

Nishkulanand Swami describes a true Sadhu as one who rids us of our doubts. In life there are many problems that cause worry: college admissions, job applications, getting married or having children, are just a few events that cause

concern. We worry, “What will happen to me in the future?” However, we have all experienced that blessings from Swamishri can rid us of all our doubts and apprehensions and make us feel at peace.

It is not just our worldly doubts that Swamishri abolishes, but also our spiritual ones. He gifts us with the conviction that we will attain Akshardham.

Upendrabhai Oza faced life’s difficulties with this conviction. Around 1975 Upendrabhai’s kidneys failed, forcing him to undergo dialysis. For over three decades he underwent treatment, and in the later stages of his life he developed diabetes and suffered a heart attack. Despite these setbacks, his *seva* and *bhakti* never diminished. He always remained content. When family members questioned, “You do so much satsang, yet why do things like this happen to you?” Upendrabhai proudly replied, “You must understand Pramukh Swami is not a doctor of this body. These illnesses will come and go, but I will attain Akshardham. I know that for a fact.”

It is such faith that enables one to face the difficulties of life with a smile. However, this conviction is not merely imaginative. Swamishri not only frees us of doubt, but also does so in such a way that we can experience the object of conviction. This is why Nishkulanand Swami continues by elaborating that such a Sadhu also takes us to Akshardham, Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s supreme abode.

KALYĀNKARTĀ – HE GIFTS US WITH AKSHARDHAM

On 6 January 1986 Pramukh Swami Maharaj went to the small village of Mojidad. He stayed at the house of a devotee named Rambhai. For many years Rambhai had been suffering from mouth cancer. He had endured several operations, but his condition continued to deteriorate. It was certain that he did not have long to live. Aware of the circumstances, Rambhai wanted to hold a three-day *parayan*

in Swamishri’s presence before he passed away. When Swamishri came to know of Rambhai’s wish, he rearranged his *vicharan* to go to Mojidad.

On the second day of the *parayan*, after puja, Swamishri went to see Rambhai. Rambhai held Swami’s hand and mustered the courage to speak, “Why are you not taking me to Dham?” Swami gazed into his eyes and explained, “You have nothing left to do. You have fulfilled all your obligations. You have taken care of your family and also of your soul. Because of this Shriji Maharaj will only do what is good for you. From now on do bhajan, remove your mind from everywhere else, and attach yourself to God. You wished to hold a *parayan* and that wish will soon be fulfilled. After Uttarayan we will fulfil your last wish. God will come to take you to Dham.”

On 9 January the *parayan* finished in Swamishri’s presence. Thereafter, Swamishri left Mojidad and continued with his *vicharan*. Then on 24 January, while Swami was in Sarangpur, news came that Rambhai had gone to Dham at 5:00 a.m. on 22 January, only a few days after Uttarayan.

His grand-daughter later described what she had seen that morning at around 2:00 a.m. She narrated, “I saw Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Pramukh Swami Maharaj enter my grandfather’s house and tell him, ‘Come on, it is time to go.’ My grandfather innocently asked ‘But, where will we leave from?’ They answered, ‘We will leave from above.’ After saying this, they all left by flying up into the sky.”

VALI VEDA PURĀNNĀ VETTĀ – EXPLAINING DIFFICULT SCRIPTURAL CONCEPTS

Nishkulanand Swami continues in this stanza by revealing yet another quality of a true Sadhu. A true Sadhu has the ability to accurately explain difficult scriptural concepts in a way that everyone can understand. As Shriji Maharaj says

in Vachanamrut Gadhada II 13, “Discourses regarding the nature of God cannot be understood by oneself even from the shastras. Even though these facts may be in the shastras, it is only when the Satpurush manifests on this earth, and one hears them being narrated by him, that one understands them. They cannot, however, be understood by one’s intellect alone, even from the shastras.”

In Vachanamrut Loya 12, Shriji Maharaj narrates one such difficult concept, “One possessing the highest level of *nirvikalp* faith realizes that countless millions of *brahmands*, each encircled by the eight barriers, appear like mere atoms before Akshar. Such is the greatness of Akshar, the abode of Purushottam Narayan. One who worships Purushottam realizing oneself to be *aksharrup* can be said to possess the highest level of *nirvikalp* faith.” At first, *nirvikalp* faith seems difficult to understand. What exactly is *nirvikalp* faith, we may ask.

However, Swamishri is able to simply explain such a difficult concept. On 25 September 2001, Pramukh Swami Maharaj was seated in an assembly. When he spoke, he very simply and practically revealed what Shriji Maharaj meant when he talked of the highest level of *nirvikalp* faith. Swamishri revealed, “When we attain this state all we will do is continuously chant Maharaj’s name, we will only do his bhajan, and continuously think about only Maharaj. We meditate only on Maharaj, and only speak about and listen to his glory. When we eat, drink, stand, sit or sleep we only think of Maharaj, Maharaj and Maharaj.” Swamishri has the ability to not only understand these difficult concepts, but also explain them to us in a practically useful way.

KOMAL VĀNI AND VĀCHĀL VISHESHA

There is an old African saying, “Three things can never be taken back; the shot arrow, spent time and the spoken word.” This is why Guna-

titanand Swami emphasizes that it is important to “Speak truthfully, benevolently and with love”. We can see this clearly in Swamishri’s life. He has never had to regret what he has said, because his speech is always truthful, benevolent and loving – a harmony often difficult to attain.

The next two qualities described are related to how a true Sadhu speaks. Nishkulanand Swami describes the Sadhu as being tactful in that he is not only eloquent, but also understanding and loving.

Several years ago Pramukh Swami Maharaj visited the BAPS Mandir in Rajkot. During Swami’s breakfast a youth activity volunteer gave a report on the various activities his *mandal* had performed throughout the year. At the end of the reporting another volunteer said to Swami, “Swami, all our youth volunteers are being taken by the children’s activity volunteers. Apart from that everything else is fine.”

Swami immediately understood the situation. He tactfully enquired, “All your volunteers are becoming children’s activity volunteers? Who do they go there to teach?”

The volunteer replied, “Children.”

Swami continued his questioning, “Yes, they go to teach children, right? So where do those children go after they have grown?”

“To the youth *mandal*,” the volunteer replied.

Finally, Swami expressed what he was trying to tell the volunteer, “So is that a good thing or a bad thing?”

“A good thing,” the volunteer finally realized.

One of the basic concepts of Satsang is unity and Swamishri is a strong believer in and promoter of unity. Whenever necessary Swamishri tactfully explains that the Satsang is one family and that by helping others we ultimately help ourselves.

The devotees in Navsari had a similar experience. In 1984 BAPS was looking for land to build a mandir in Navsari. After much searching

and discussing there were two pieces of land to choose from. One piece was the land that we currently have and which touches the highway, while the other piece was adjacent to a railway line. After a number of meetings, the opinions of devotees and sadhus were split evenly. Pramukh Swami Maharaj himself had a preference for the land touching the highway, but how would he convince those on the other side.

Once, during a meeting, the devotees who wanted to buy the land adjacent to the railway line argued strongly for their case. They said that if this piece of land was bought, then people on the train could do darshan as the train passed by the mandir. It seemed as if they were right.

However, Swamishri explained, “Yes, you are right. Your intentions are rightly placed. However, people who drive by in their cars will also be able to see God’s *murti* and they, unlike those on the train, would actually be able to stop, get

out and come for darshan.”

Despite the circumstance, Swamishri has the ability to both understand and convince, while being careful to never disappoint others in the process.

EVA SANTNE NĀMU HU SHISHA

Although others in the world have virtues which allow them to excel in their own fields, Nishkulanand Swami describes the saintly virtues of the Satpurush. Swamishri is such a Satpurush since he possesses all the virtues. Among the ocean of virtues that Swamishri possesses, we have looked at only a few. We pray that one day we can understand his true greatness and attain his blessings. Until then, let us join Nishkulanand Swami by bowing our heads in reverence to such a Sadhu – “*Eva Santne nāmu hu shish.*” ♦

(Contd. from pg. 35)

Dipak continued, “Humility seems to be at the foundation of your organization. This is the first time I have seen something like that.”

Swamishri added, “None of us believe that we have done anything. Bhagwan Swaminarayan does everything. God is the all-doer. It is this principle that lets everyone share the credit. There is no jealousy or hatred.”

The underlying cause of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s humility is his love and devotion to God and guru. A devotee once asked him, “If God does everything, what do you do?”

“I am his humble servant,” Pramukh Swami replied. He believes himself to be God’s servant and doesn’t like to be compared with him. If someone gets too excited and compares him to God or his guru, calls him God or calls him greater than God, Pramukh Swami feels as if he himself has committed a grave sin.

Sadguru Muktanand Swami, another of Bhagwan Swaminarayan’s senior *paramhansas*, describes the greatness of such a sadhu in a bha-jan:

“*Hu tale Hari dhukadā, te talāy dāse re;
Muktānand mahā sant ne, Prabhu pragat
pāse re...*”

“Forsake I-ness and God will become close to you; Muktanand Swami says God is embodied within such a great Sadhu.”

Pramukh Swami has no ego. Self-importance does not drive him. He derives his strength solely from his faith in God; and as a result, God resides within him.

Let us join in by paying homage to our guru, Pramukh Swami Maharaj – who is an ocean of virtues, the pinnacle of mental stability and the embodiment of humility. To this Sadhu, I bow down – “*Evā Santne nāmu hu shish.*” ♦

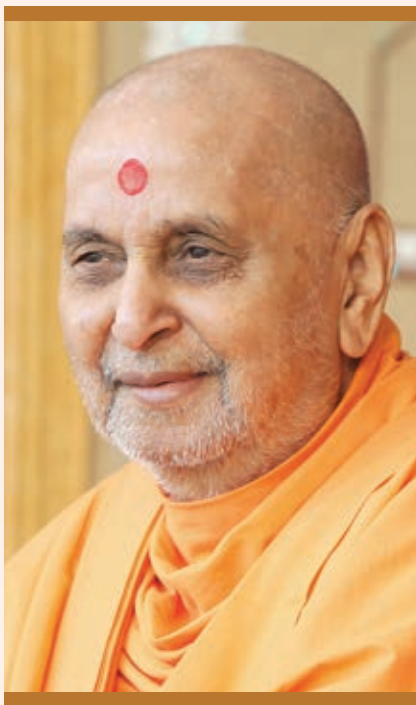
When in Rome...

The distant church-bells echoed through the damp morning air. It was Saturday in Milan, and the day had just begun. The aroma of freshly baked bread and strong cappuccinos swirled toward the rushing commuters. Outdoor cafes overflowed with food and chatter, and many people were discussing the morning headlines. As taxis weaved in and out of traffic, one could barely believe that the pace of life was not always this fast.

But hundreds of years ago, when St. Augustine arrived in this city, the clock towers and their heavy hands dictated the tempo. This didn't trouble St. Augustine; after all, priesthood was a fairly relaxed vocation. What did puzzle him, however, was that people did not fast here on Saturdays, as they did back in Rome. Not knowing what to do, he penned a letter to the Bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose, outlining his dilemma. In his reply St. Ambrose offered the advice, "When I am in Rome, I fast on a Saturday; when I am at Milan, I do not. Follow the custom of the church where you are."

When St. Ambrose wrote these words he probably didn't realise that they would be taken out of context and applied not just to local church worship, but also to all aspects of life. Over the years his message evolved into: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." Simply put, change yourself to match your surroundings.

There may be some truth to this message.



Sometimes you do have to adapt to the locale. Imagine an American driving on the right-hand side in England. But at the same time, some things cannot and should not be compromised – our religious principles. The saying "When in Rome..." is not limited to the way we dress, eat or drink. Remember, it was originally about when and how to worship. Pramukh Swami Maharaj leads a life of worship in line with the religious principles given by Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his gurus. He leads a life guided by the book.

DO AS THE SHASTRAS SAY...

In Vachanamrut Gadhada II 61, Shriji Maharaj states, "A renunciant who, despite encountering wealth and women in his travels to other regions, remains unaffected and continues to firmly adhere to all of his *niyams*, is considered to be great amongst all renunciants." Even though Swamishri has travelled far and wide, he has never allowed even the slightest lapse in following these *niyams*.

At Dar-es-Salaam airport, Swamishri's flight touched down. The sadhus and devotees unbuckled their seat-belts and began making preparations to leave the plane. When they were about to clear customs, uniformed officials asked them to step aside for further checking. They complied, but were confused as to why. It slowly emerged that some adversaries had planted false rumours that Swamishri and his accompanying sadhus were smuggling diamonds into

the country. For a person who has never spent so much as a penny on himself, how could the thought of illegally possessing diamonds even cross his mind?

The devotees present pleaded with the customs officials, “Swamishri is a renunciant of women and wealth, a God-realized sadhu. Please, there is no need to check his belongings.”

Unfortunately, this only fuelled their doubts. They meticulously searched the sadhus’ *potlas* (basic luggage), emptying everything. Even the pujas were unwrapped and when they saw the small plastic bottle containing kumkum (red vermillion) they thought they might be onto something. The officials twisted off the lid and peered in. They even ran their fingers through the powder, spilling it everywhere, but found no diamonds. Stumped, the customs officials gave up. They didn’t find any diamonds, but what puzzled them even more was that Swamishri did not have with him the basic 75 shillings that all travellers should possess. The official remarked, “This is the first time in my life I have come across such a passenger.”

This may have been the first such experience for the customs official, but Swamishri was just observing his vows.

A similar incident occurred when he was travelling by train to Mumbai. When the ticket collector arrived to check the tickets he asked for the Rs. 50 reservation charge. Swamishri and the sadhus with him had no money and so told the inspector that they would give the money on reaching Mumbai. Fortunately, however, a nearby passenger kindly offered to pay the Rs. 50 reservation charge.

Swamishri is the President of the BAPS Sanstha. Yet whether at home or abroad, his firm resolve hasn’t changed. He could ask for or even demand anything he wants. Devotees for years have been offering facilities to make his life and *vicharan* easier. To most of them, Swamishri has firmly refused. In a similar fashion, he has been

just as firm in following his vow of celibacy. He has upheld his *niyams* even when influential dignitaries have tried to persuade him to relax his observance of these vows.

In 1977, during his satsang tour in East Africa Swamishri met President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania at the Presidential palace. President Nyerere was impressed by Swamishri’s benevolence towards all faiths. He took the opportunity to ask for his blessings.

“Swamishri,” he requested, “my mother is 90 years old and is very ill. Please grace her room and bless her.”

When the President’s request was translated for Swamishri he at once replied to a devotee, “Tell him that because of our vow we cannot go near women.”

The devotee hesitated. How could he say no to the President? What if he refused to understand and found Swami’s response offensive? Seeing his reluctance, Swamishri again firmly said, “Just tell him what I said. Why are you scared? Tell him that Swami has blessed her; the blessings will reach her and she will get well!”

The devotee gathered the courage to explain the vows of Swaminarayan sadhus. Instead of finding offence, the President developed new admiration for Swamishri. He was pleased to know that such a pure sadhu would not cut corners.

A few years later, in 1980, Swamishri was in Philadelphia. It unfolded that Swamishri needed urgent cataract surgery. Swamishri insisted that only male nurses be present throughout his operation, even when under anaesthesia. Devotees and medical advisors speculated that such an arrangement might not be possible. Male nurses cannot simply be drafted in at such short notice.

Nevertheless, Swamishri’s resolve was even stronger, “If such arrangements cannot be made then we will perform the operation when we return to India. I am in no hurry.”

The devotees felt that Swamishri did need to

hurry, because there was a chance he could go blind. But Swamishri was not ready to forsake his *niyams*.

IGNORE THE MENU...

We've seen how Swamishri has remained detached from wealth and women. Likewise, Swamishri's travels have taken him to exotic destinations, yet food and other such things have never interested him. Whenever people travel abroad, it is their natural tendency to relax and experience the local customs, culture and traditions. People like to experiment with local cuisines, try out new fashions and experience the night-life. For Swamishri though, his *niyams* take priority. He has visited Italy, the Middle East, Thailand and Hong Kong – but he had no interest at all in even tasting pasta, falafel, tofu or noodles. Instead, satsang is always at the top of the menu; indeed, it is the only thing on the list.

In 1984 Swamishri sat down for dinner at a devotee's house in Nairobi. Everyone present tried to coax him to have some pizza. Swamishri refused, saying, "Others are fond of pizza. I am fond of *mamra* (puffed rice)."

On another occasion a sadhu brought three different flavours of ice cream to Swamishri. Swamishri turned the spoon upside-down and barely touched it to the ice cream. Whatever little that managed to stick to the spoon was all that he tasted. The sadhu asked which of the three flavours he liked.

Flatly, Swamishri replied, "They all tasted the same to me."

The sadhu expressed with surprise, "But there are three different flavours!"

Swamishri's response was priceless, "I can only see three different colours."

It makes us wonder – would he have noticed the difference had he been presented 31 flavours to taste?

DON'T LISTEN TO THE MASSES...

Chapter two of the Bhaktachintamani reveals some of the fundamental principles by which the Satpurush lives. For example, verse 22 elaborates, "*Sāvdhān lajjāvān kharā...*" – "He is conscious not to act in a way that might bring dishonour or embarrassment." This is then followed by the words "*Lok ācharan na juve jarā...*" – "He doesn't look at what the world is doing." At first glance this may seem contradictory. How can one be aware of not bringing dishonour upon oneself and yet not seem to care about the world? It is the society and its accepted norms that determine if people are praised or shamed. However, Swamishri is convinced that so long as he upholds the *niyams* prescribed for sadhus, God and guru will be pleased, regardless of what others have to say.

Swamishri does not take liberties even for the sake of satsang growth.

A renowned social worker and long time admirer of Swamishri and the Sanstha once suggested that Swamishri take a little freedom in his vow of celibacy. He argued that by doing so, Satsang would spread greatly.

He was taken aback by Swamishri's answer, "We do not believe in spreading Satsang at the cost of our vows. If Satsang spreads, all is well and good. If it does not, we are not worried. Whether or not Satsang spreads is in Shriji Maharaj's hands. Many say that because of our strict adherence to our *niyams* our Sanstha will not remain for long. To them I say that we will serve the Sanstha as long as it runs, and then whatever is Maharaj's wish... If Satsang dwindles, we will sit alone and worship God, but we will never forsake the *niyams* that Shriji Maharaj has given us."

Furthermore, some say Swamishri is too orthodox and therefore unwilling to accept other ideas and opinions. But they could not be more wrong. Where Swamishri has felt necessary he has utilized modern technology, accepted sug-

gestions from young minds and allowed the organization to flourish in non-traditional avenues. As a result, the Sanstha runs a website and an official YouTube channel, it has produced a large-format film as well as a cutting-edge light and sound watershow. He has been flexible and practical where needed, yet firm on his religious principles.

Likewise he expects the same from today's youth. He acknowledges that their lives take them through many challenges, particularly at college and work, where they have to keep friends and clients happy. Their *niyams* are sometimes put to the test. To give them strength, he has given his blessings so that they may stay resolute in their *niyams*.

DO AS SWAMISHRI WOULD DO...

"When in Rome..." teaches us that from time to time we need to change our colours. However, in doing so we must be careful not to change ourselves. Even the very successful Coca-Cola Company realizes that it needs to cater to different tastes. Coca-Cola changes the sweetness of its drink according to local preferences. When it comes to core principles though, it has learnt from its mistakes. In 1985 Coca-Cola changed

its magic formula and dabbled with 'New Coke'. Few liked it. Sales fell and consumers protested. 'Coca-Cola Classic' was re-launched within months.

Swamishri has travelled the world over, from Rome to Tokyo. He has changed his colours where necessary, but always keeping his principles solid. Swamishri has struck the chord just right. He has mastered the balance that Nishkulanand Swami reveals.

In 1984, in Rome, Swamishri met Pope John Paul II. As they exchanged gifts, Swamishri handed him a *murti* of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and humbly explained, "I am a sadhu and therefore I have no material wealth. What else can I give to you?"

Whether Swamishri is in Rome meeting the Pope or in Tanzania meeting the President, he remains unaffected and continues to adhere to all his *niyams*. For Swamishri, keeping Shriji Maharaj's and his guru's honour (*laj*) is more important than keeping the world's *laj*. That is why he is considered to be great amongst all renunciants. And that is why on this auspicious occasion of Guru Purnima let us bow to him in prayer that may we take inspiration from his life – "*Evā Santne nāmu hu shish.*" ♦

CHATURMAS NIYAMS

30 June to 24 November 2012

As instructed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the Shikshapatri and by the wish of Pramukh Swami Maharaj, devotees should undertake extra spiritual observances during the four holy months of *chaturmas*. This year *chaturmas* is from 30 June 2012 (Ashadh *sud* 11) to 24 November 2012 (Kartik *sud* 11). To please Bhagwan Swaminarayan and Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the following extra observances should be undertaken:

1. One month *dharna-parna*, *chandrayan*, etc. or *ek-tana* during the month of Shravan (20 July to 17 August 2012).
2. Extra *malas*, *dandvats*, *pradakshinas* as per one's convenience and faith.
3. Daily read one extra Vachanamrut and five

Swamini Vato.

4. Read *Yogiji Maharaj's Biography*, Parts 1, 2 & 3 and *Prasangam* 2010.
5. In accordance with the wish of senior sadhus listen to 'Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Amrutvani', Samput 1 and 'Sant Samagam', Samput 6.
6. Watch and show to others the new DVD depicting Bhagwan Swaminarayan's life through paintings.
7. Inspire five people to give up addictions, attend *satsang sabha* and conduct a daily *ghar sabha*.

Note: During Chaturmas, devotees should not eat brinjals, white and red radish, sugarcane or *mogri*.



Hindu Festivals

July-August 2012



3 JULY 2012

GURU PURNIMA (ASHADH SUD 15)

Hindus worldwide celebrate this *tithi* in veneration of Bhagwan Veda Vyas, who is considered the first (*adi*) guru of Sanatan Dharma. On this day the spiritual guru is offered puja by devotees.

To attain *moksha* on the spiritual path, the guidance of the guru is obligatory. The shastras attach immense importance to this fact, considering the guru as one who leads the aspirant from darkness to enlightenment. (ref. Details in Chapter 18, *Hindu Festivals*, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2010.)

In the BAPS Sanstha, Guru Purnima is traditionally celebrated by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in Bocharan.

5 JULY 2012

JHULAN YATRA/HINDOLA PARVA (ASHADH VAD 2)

Hindola and *jhulan* mean swing. *Parva* and *yatra* mean period. The Hindola festival commences on this day. It is celebrated for five, seven or 13 days by various *sampradayas*. In the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, it is celebrated for one month until Shravan *vad* 2.

Traditionally in Vaishnavism, the *utsava-vi-*

graha deities in mandirs are placed in beautifully decorated swings. Devotees then devotionally swing Bhagwan. This form of devotion induces *vaatsalya bhaava* in devotees. Children especially look forward to this festival. In Vraj, Shri Krishna's land of divine *lila*, *jhulan yatra* is one of the biggest festivals of the year, celebrated for 13 days. Thousands of devotees from the surrounding countryside visit the mandirs in Vraj for darshan of Bhagwan in the exquisitely decorated *hindolas* (*jhulans*).

In Puri, the *jhulan yatra* is celebrated from Shravan *sud* 10, for a period of seven days.

In the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, the swings are changed every few days. They are made of fresh flowers, vegetables, grains and pulses, spices, utensils, cloth and towards the end of the *utsav*, of *pavitra* and *rakhis*. Devotees sing the bhajans of *hindola* composed by the poet *paramhansas*.

20 JULY 2012

SHRAVAN SUD 1

Shravan, the most holy month of Chaturmas, begins on this day. This marks the celebration of all fasting *vrats* such as *ektana*, *dharna-parna* and various forms of *chandrayan*. Devotees take

special vows of devotion such as visiting mandirs everyday for offering *bili* leaves to Mahadevi, extra *pradakshinas*, *dandvat pranams*, *malas*, listening to *katha* and *parayan*.

2 AUGUST 2012

SHRAVAN SUD PURNIMA

Hindus globally celebrate Baleva and Raksha Bandhan on this day. Women tie *rakhis* on the right wrist of their brothers and cousins after offering puja, which includes *arti* and offering him a sweet, usually *penda*. By performing the puja ritual of applying *chandlo* of kumkum and rice on the forehead and offering a garland, the sister venerates the Paramatma within her brother's *atma* and prays to him to protect her brother's purity and to enlighten him with a life of satsang and bhakti, and thus by these two factors protect him from *maya*. This is true *raksha* – protection.

In some coastal parts of Maharashtra, women perform puja with coconuts to boats and to Dariya deva – the ocean god, to protect their seafaring menfolk from the monsoon turbulence. Hence this day is known as Nariyali Purnima.

In the Swaminarayan Sampradaya, huge garlands of *rakhis* are adorned on Bhagwan in mandirs. Where sadhus are present, on behalf of the guru, they tie the sanctified *rakhis* from the garlands on the wrist of male devotees. The underlying sentiment of this is to protect and realize *ekantik dharma* and thus free them from the *bandhan* (bondage) of samsara and have *bandhan* with only Paramatma.

10 AUGUST 2012

JANMASHTAMI (SHRAVAN VAD)

Krishna Janmashtami. Hindus jubilantly celebrate the incarnation of Shri Krishna Bhagwan on this *tithi*. Devotees celebrate by observing a waterless fast, singing devotional bhajans all day and enacting episodes of Shri Krishna's *lila* in the evening gatherings. In many Vaishnava mandirs, milk *abhishek* is performed. Midnight *arti* is performed and *chhapan bhog* is offered. This

is a small *annakut* of 56 sweet delicacies, which includes *makhan* (butter) and *panchajiri* – a mixture of powdered ginger, *jeera*, coriander, suva (*dill*) and sugar. This *prasadam* is then distributed to devotees.

The next day is Nandotsav, which is also celebrated with great festivity in Vaishnava mandirs. This is the festival of Nand Baba, Shri Krishna's foster father. In Gujarat, an exquisite dish of about 44 or more vegetables, known as *patrali*, is traditionally offered to Bhagwan on this day, along with *shiro*, *puri* and *bhajiya*.

This completes the calendrical cycle of festivals which began in Kartik of 2011. However, the intercalary *adhik mas* or Purushottam *mas* occurs in Bhadarva (Bhadrapad) in 2012. Various *sampradayas* and Hindus generally, celebrate *adhik mas* in their own traditional manner. This is detailed in Chapter 29 of *Hindu Festivals* published by Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2010.

18 AUG. TO 16 SEPT. 2012

ADHIK-PURUSHOTTAM MAS. ADHIK BHADARVA (INTERCALARY MONTH)

Since the Hindu calendar is lunarbased and lags behind the solar-based calendar, an intercalary month is added approximately every 2.5 years. It is considered more auspicious than even Shravan. Paradoxically, auspicious rituals are not performed during this month. Instead, greater merit is gained by performing bhakti rituals and *vrats* such as reading sacred texts, holding *kathas* and *parayans*, fasting, *pradakshinas*, *malas*, donations, pilgrimages, bathing in holy rivers and so on.

The Pushti Sampradaya of Vallabhacharya observes the following four rituals of Shri Krishna during this month: *seva*, *smaran*, *katha* and darshan.

Other Vaishnava *sampradayas* observe bhakti rituals in a similar way.

Devotees in the Swaminarayan Sampradaya observe bhakti rituals cited above just as they do during Shravan. ♦

LIVING HEALTHILY WITH DIABETES

Part 2

The previous article in this series, The Diabetes Epidemic, highlighted the global impact of diabetes, its causes and the harmful consequences. This article will again focus on Type 2 diabetes and discuss the symptoms, treatments and prevention.

Type 2 diabetes is a slowly progressive condition and many diabetics may not suffer from any symptoms until later in the stage of the condition. In the UK it is estimated that approximately 850,000 people may be suffering from diabetes but remain undiagnosed as they may not be exhibiting any symptoms. Hence, regular screening of high risk groups, e.g., the overweight, those with a family history of diabetes or those with a history of high blood pressure, heart attack or stroke, helps to diagnose the condition at an earlier stage.

SYMPTOMS OF DIABETES

The typical symptoms of diabetes are:

- ◆ Excessive thirst
- ◆ Urge to pass urine frequently
- ◆ Excessive tiredness
- ◆ Abnormal weight loss
- ◆ Frequent infections, such as, urinary tract or thrush
- ◆ Delayed healing of cuts and wounds
- ◆ Genital itching
- ◆ Blurred vision

In some cases diabetes may be diagnosed when an individual develops one of the complications of diabetes. These include:

- ◆ Heart attack or stroke
- ◆ Impaired kidney function (chronic kidney disease)

- ◆ Damage to the nerves resulting in tingling sensation in hands and/or feet. If this affects the nerves supplying the digestive system, this may result in vomiting or changes in bowel habit (constipation or diarrhoea)
- ◆ Retinopathy due to changes in blood supply to the nerves in the eye. In some cases a routine eye check may indicate evidence of diabetes
- ◆ Problems in feet due to damage to nerves supplying the feet, resulting in unrecognized cuts or delayed healing
- ◆ Erectile dysfunction in men, which may predate the onset of other serious conditions, such as, heart attack
- ◆ Sexual dysfunction in women or recurrent miscarriage or stillbirth.

TREATMENT OF DIABETES

The aim of treating diabetes is to lower the blood glucose level and to treat any associated conditions which, together with diabetes, will increase the risk of developing complications like heart attacks, stroke and chronic kidney disease (impairment of kidney function, eventually leading to kidney failure). To date, there is no cure for diabetes.

Treatment of diabetes also involves:

- ◆ Lifestyle changes
- ◆ Regular monitoring

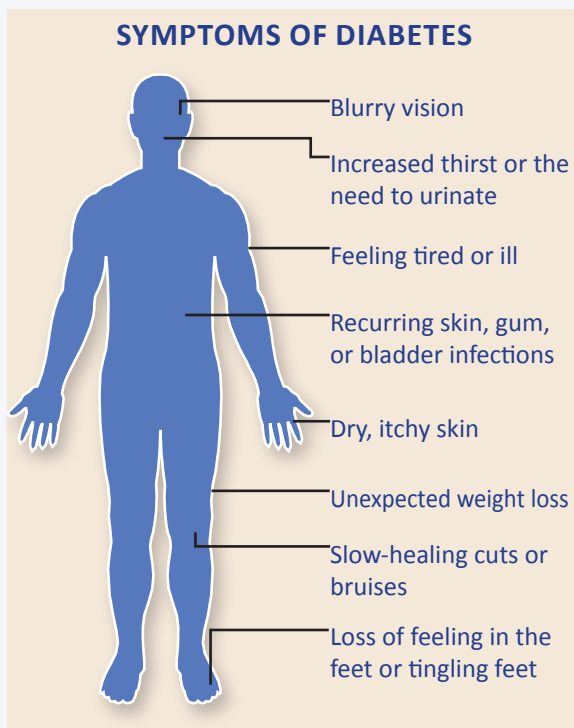
- ◆ Medications – tablets or insulin
- ◆ Treatment of associated conditions, such as, hypertension and raised cholesterol.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

1. Three regular meals, as this helps to control the appetite and reduce surges in blood glucose levels.
2. Include starchy carbohydrates such as basmati rice, grainy breads such as granary and rye, natural muesli and new or sweet potatoes. (There is often a misconception that starch food should be avoided).
3. Reduce saturated fats such as butter and cheese. Use low fat cheese and spreads and eat oven-baked food rather than fried.
4. Eat more fruits and vegetables.
5. Eat more beans and lentils.
6. Reduce sugar and sugary foods, however this does not mean eliminating sugar completely.
7. Reduce salt intake to less than 6 g/day.
8. Stop smoking, as smoking increases the risks of suffering a heart attack or stroke, developing kidney damage and peripheral vascular disease. Smoking also increases the risk of developing various cancers and lung conditions such as chronic obstructive airway diseases (COAD). COAD is the most common condition caused by smoking and is under recognised.
9. According to Diabetes UK, diabetic foods and drinks are not helpful.

REGULAR MONITORING

1. Regular monitoring of the blood glucose and glycosylated haemoglobin (HbA1c) as recommended by your doctor.
2. Monitoring of associated parameters such as weight, blood pressure, lipids (cholesterol and triglycerides), kidney function and retinopathy checks to detect changes in the eye at an early stage.



MEDICATION

There are two main types:

- ◆ Oral hypoglycaemic agents. There are several types of medications available and these include the biguanides, sulphonylureas, glitazones (TZD), gliptins (DPP-4 inhibitors) and GLP-1 agonists. Each group of drugs work in a different way to reduce blood glucose levels and have their own side effects. Your doctor will advise you on the appropriate medication
- ◆ Insulins. These can either be derived from animals, be synthetic or analogue. Insulins can also be divided according to their duration of action (rapid, short, medium or long).

TREATMENT OF ASSOCIATED CONDITIONS

Diabetes increases the individual's risk of developing cardio-metabolic conditions, such as, heart attack, stroke and kidney failure. Hence, the treatment of associated conditions is as important as treating the raised blood

glucose levels.

1. Raised blood pressure (hypertension). The current target is to maintain the blood pressure at less than 130/80 mm mercury, using one or more BP lowering medications as necessary.
2. Raised lipid levels (cholesterol and triglycerides) aiming to keep the total cholesterol level at less than 4 mmol/l (200 mg/dL). Drugs used to treat this include statins, fibrates and ezetimibe, The UK and Europe use the SI units, hence mmol. Like all drugs, there are recognised side effects with ezetimibe, however it is an important add on to statins where the control is sub-optimal or as a sole treatment in situations where statins are not tolerated.

The role of complementary therapies:

There are various claims made about the use of complementary therapies and, according to Diabetes UK, one third of patients will have tried some form of complementary therapy.

The general advice is that whilst there are no scientifically proven benefits, diabetics who prefer to try this should not abandon the treatment prescribed by their doctor but instead discuss with him or her so that appropriate monitoring of your diabetes can be undertaken.

Various claims are also made about the potential benefit of using *karela* (bitter gourd) and cinnamon to lower blood glucose levels. Whilst many diabetics find this helpful, the quantity required to achieve any significant benefit is not known. The advice, as for other complementary therapies, is to discuss with your doctor and use these agents as additions to, but not as the mainstay of, regular treatment.

PREVENTION

The preventative aspect of diabetes care focuses on good control of diabetes and its associated conditions, regular monitoring of diabetes and complications, healthy lifestyle, exercise

and education.

1. Weight loss, with a combination of healthy eating and regular exercise, helps to lower blood glucose levels and in pre-diabetic individuals (impaired glucose tolerance) delays the onset of overt diabetes. The British Heart Foundation recommends 30 minutes of exercise five times a week to achieve the multiple benefits of exercise.
2. Regular monitoring of blood sugar levels, as well as regular checks of the eyes for diabetic retinopathy and the feet for signs of circulatory or nerve-related damage are important in identifying any damage at an early stage.
3. Structured diabetes education programmes, such as DESMOND in the UK, are essential in enabling diabetics to have a better understanding of the condition and to have better control of their health. (Desmond is for type 2 diabetics.)
4. Diabetics, along with the elderly and those who suffer from other chronic conditions, are at an increased risk of developing flu and pneumonia. The advice for these groups is to have the flu and pneumococcal vaccines on a regular basis.

Diabetes is a progressive condition which affects multiple body systems. Good diabetes control and regular monitoring improves the quality of life for the individual and their families. However it does require good understanding, commitment and perseverance.

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FAQs On Hinduism

From 'Hinduism, An Introduction'

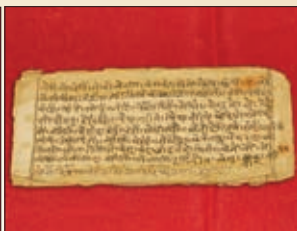
by Sadhu Vivekjivandas and Consultant Editor Dr Janak Dave



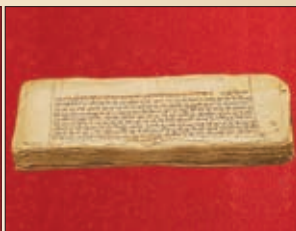
Rig Veda manuscript



Yajur Veda manuscript



Sama Veda manuscript



Atharva Veda manuscript

1. WHAT ARE THE SACRED TEXTS OF THE HINDUS?

i. Vedas (Shrutis)

The most sacred texts or shastras of the Hindus are called the Vedas. The name Veda is derived from the Sanskrit root word *vid*, which means 'to know'. So the Vedas mean divine knowledge.

The Vedas were revealed by God to the enlightened rishis of India during samadhi. Since they were revealed by God they are called the Shrutis – that which was 'heard' or revealed. They were recited and transmitted through an unbroken oral tradition, and written many centuries later.

Veda refers to Samhita texts which contain mantras or verses used in *yajna* rituals. There are four Vedas: Rig Veda Samhita, Yajur Veda Samhita, Sama Veda Samhita and Atharva Veda Samhita. The Rig Veda Samhita contains *ruchas* (hymns made of mantras), that are sung in praise of various nature deities like Fire (Agni), Water (Varuna), Rain (Indra), Thunder (Rudra), River, Sun, etc. The Shukla Yajur Veda Samhita is a collection of mantras and the Krishna Yajur Veda Samhita contains both mantras and prose that are used in performing rituals during *yajnas*. The Sama Veda Samhita also contains mantras that are sung during worship and performance

of *yajnas*. The Atharva Veda contains mantras, spells and charms mainly related to health, progeny, defence and attack, keeping evil spirits away and restoring harmony in family life.

Each of the four Vedas has its own Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishad texts.

ii. Brahmanas

The Brahmana texts are mainly in prose, describing rules for various rituals and explaining their meaning and purpose. They contain myths and stories to make them interesting and understandable.

iii. Aranyakas

The Aranyakas are the 'forest' texts that focus on meditation on Ultimate Reality and the mystical interpretation of Vedic rituals. They form a transitional link between the Brahmanas and the Upanishads.

iv. Upanishads

The Upanishads are chronologically the last portion and spiritually the highest teachings of the Vedas, and are also known as Vedanta. They deal with the basic philosophy of Hinduism, including notions on the nature of God, soul, creation, *moksha*, rebirth, karma, etc. They are mainly in dialogue form. In all there are over 200 Upanishads out of which thirteen are considered to be the oldest and principal ones. The



Guru imparting Vedic knowledge to his students in a gurukula



Aishwarya: Bhagwan Krishna reveals his divine cosmic form to Arjuna



Bhagwan Vishnu

Upanishadic period is believed to be the most creative period of Indian philosophy.

v. Smritis

The secondary sacred texts are the Smritis which means that which was ‘remembered’. They are based on the Vedas and deal with social and domestic laws for the Hindus. They prescribe *vidhis* (acts to be performed) and *nishedhas* (prohibited acts) in the moral development and social life of a person. The main Hindu law books include the Manu Smriti and Yajnavalkya Smriti.

The Itihasa (epics), namely, Ramayan and Mahabharat, and the eighteen Purans, also form a part of the Smriti shastras but are considered to be a separate group.

2. DO HINDUS BELIEVE IN ONE GOD OR MANY?

Most Hindus believe in one supreme God called Paramatma, Parmeshwara or Bhagwan. He is worshipped in his many manifestations like Rama, Krishna, Shiva and others. The Hindus also worship the life-supporting elements of nature like the sun, earth, water, fire, moon, etc. and also other spiritual beings – all known as devas or *devatas*. The Purans mention that there are 330 million devas.

3. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF BHAGWAN?

The Hindu concept of Bhagwan is that he is supreme, one, eternal, omnipotent (all-powerful

and all-doer), omniscient (all-knower) and omnipresent (all-pervading). He is full of divine virtues and devoid of *mayik* qualities. He takes birth in a human and other forms on earth to liberate souls and destroy evil. He is *sakara* i.e. has a human and other forms. There is also a belief that he is *nirakar* (formless) and *jyotiswarup* (divine light).

Paramatma is *sat-chit-ananda* and the giver of the fruits of karmas (*karma phala pradata*) to humans. He possesses divine qualities like *jnan* (knowledge), *aishwarya* (lordship), *shakti* (ability), *virya* (power), *tej* (brilliance) and *bala* (strength).

4. DOES BHAGWAN COME IN A HUMAN FORM ON EARTH?

Yes. Hindus believe in the unique concept of avatar, which means, “one who descends”. Bhagwan is born on earth in a human and other forms out of compassion and mercy for souls. He gives his blissful happiness and liberates the *daivi* (pious) *jivas* (souls) and destroys *adharma* or evil. Though he takes a human or other forms he is totally divine unlike other beings.

There are 24 main avatars, out of which 10 are the principal avatars of Bhagwan Vishnu: Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Varah (boar), Nrusimha (man-lion), Vaman (dwarf), Parashuram, Ram, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki (the future incarnation of Vishnu). ♦

Vicharan

PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ'S

April & May 2012

Sarangpur



Swamishri blesses sadhus and devotees from the assembly stage



Swamishri performs the *pratishtha* ritual of *arti*

APRIL: SARANGPUR

1, Sunday; 231st Shri Hari Jayanti Celebration

At 9.05 a.m. Swamishri came out of his room in his wheelchair and proceeded for Thakorji's darshan. The *murtis* in the mandir shrines were festively decorated for the Shri Hari Jayanti Celebration. In the Rang Mandap, Swamishri inaugurated *Shishu Kilol*, an audio CD published by Swaminarayan Aksharpith. Thereafter, Swamishri blessed the devotees seated in the mandir grounds.

At the Yagnapurush Smruti Mandir, commentaries written by Bhadresh Swami on the Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads were inaugurated. Swamishri blessed Bhadresh Swami for these commentaries and also for his next commentary on the *Nasadiya Sukta* in the Rig Veda.

The Hari Jayanti Festival was celebrated at night. Swamishri was unable to be present.

6, Friday; Yagnapurush Smruti Mandir Patotsav

To celebrate the 31st *patotsav* of Yagnapurush Smruti Mandir the *mahapuja* rituals were performed prior to Swamishri's arrival. An *annakut* was arranged before Shastriji Maharaj's *murti*. When Swamishri came he performed *arti* and offered flowers to the *murti* of Shastriji Maharaj.

9, Monday

For years Swamishri's relentless *vicharan* has spurred the growth of satsang in all parts of Gujarat and other places. One outstanding feature of this growth is the development and consecration of hundreds of *hari* mandirs and *shikharbaddh* mandirs. Today, Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of *arti* and *mantra pushpanjali* of *murtis* for five BAPS *kutir* and *hari* mandirs in the Panchmahal and Vadodara districts. The five villages were: Sanpiya (Kalol region), Satmana (Kalol),

Jamdhara (Limkheda), Jekanpura (Ghoghamba) and Kanjesar (Dhanpur).

13, Friday

Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of puja, *arti* and *mantra pushpanjali* of *murtis* for BAPS *hari* mandirs in Yoginagar (in Borivali East, Mumbai), Nalasopara (Mumbai), New Ranip (in Ahmedabad) and Baroliya-Pipalfaliya (Valsad region).

17, Tuesday

Doctors advised Swamishri to rest for a few days because of his back pain. Swamishri was given pain relieving treatment by Dr Bhuyang of Hinduja Hospital, Mumbai.

27, Friday

Swamishri performed the *arti* of Thakorji at all the three shrines of the mandir to celebrate its 96th *patotsav*. A grand *annakut* was arranged before Thakorji.

MAY: SARANGPUR

Swamishri followed his daily morning routine of Thakorji's darshan, blessing the sadhus and devotees from his wheelchair and then returning to his room to do puja. During the day Swamishri attends to letters and listens to *katha*.

17, Thursday; Yogi Jayanti

Prior to Swamishri's arrival on the assembly stage senior sadhus discoursed about the virtues of Yogiji Maharaj on the occasion of the Yogi Jayanti Celebration. When Swamishri arrived on the stage Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and Pujya Viveksagar Swami honoured Swamishri with a shawl of *mogra* flowers.

Swamishri also blessed 200 children from Surat, who were mellifluously chanting Vedic mantras with *yagna kunds* before them. The children of Surat *bal mandal* were going to perform *mahapuja* rituals in the homes of 1,025 devotees in

Surat. Swamishri showered his blessings and divine joy upon the children and their *karyakars*.

22, Tuesday, Sarangpur, Ahmedabad, Sarangpur

With Swamishri's persistent back pain and pain in his right leg doctors advised that a CT scan be done to check his condition. At about 10.30 a.m. Swamishri departed for Ahmedabad by car. On the way he gave darshan to devotees gathered on the roadside at Barvala, Dhandhuka and other towns. At 12.40 p.m. Swamishri's car entered the BAPS Yogiji Maharaj Hospital, opposite the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir in Shahibaug, Ahmedabad. Thousands of devotees had been waiting in the scorching summer sun to have Swamishri's darshan. Swamishri entered the hospital for the first time since its inauguration the previous month.

After having darshan of the *murtis* of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj in the main lounge Swamishri was garlanded by Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and Pujya Ishwaracharan Swami. Thereafter, Swamishri had a CT scan of his back. Then Swamishri retired for his afternoon rest in the hospital. At 4.00 p.m. Swamishri sanctified the various wards, operation theatres and the ayurvedic section. At 5.10 p.m. Swamishri came for Thakorji's darshan in the mandir. The whole mandir complex was filled with devotees, some of whom had been waiting in the heat since 3.00 p.m. Swamishri blessed all and departed at 5.35 p.m. Swamishri arrived back in Sarangpur at 8.00 p.m.

30, Wednesday

Swamishri performed the *pratishtha* rituals of *arti* of the *murtis* for the BAPS *hari* mandir in Kamrej, Surat. ♦

Source from Gujarati text: Sadhu Priyadarshandas

Translation: Sadhu Vivekjivandas



Pramukh Swami Maharaj Receives Pacemaker Implant

14 June 2012, Ahmedabad



Swamishri greets devotees on returning to the mandir after the pacemaker was implanted



Swamishri blesses Dr Madhubhai, father of Dr Tejas Patel

After 3½ months in Sarangpur, Swamishri arrived in Ahmedabad on 14 June 2012. The following morning on Friday, 15 June, Swamishri had a pacemaker implanted to help control the periods of irregular heartbeats he had been experiencing recently.

The 90-minute procedure was performed by the world-renowned Ahmedabad-based interventional cardiologist Dr Tejasbhai Patel. Other members of the operating team included Dr Yash Lokhandwala from Mumbai, one of India's leading electrophysiologists; Dr Sanjaybhai Shah, an experienced interventional cardiologist; and anaesthetist, Dr Rajnibhai Patel.

The procedure was performed under local anaesthesia. This meant that Swamishri was

likely to feel some discomfort during the procedure. However, when asked, Swamishri replied that he did not feel any pain or discomfort at all.

The doctors reported that the procedure had been completed smoothly without any problems. Afterwards, Swamishri met and blessed the doctors, paramedical staff and hospital management staff, before returning to the BAPS Mandir in Ahmedabad.

Presently, Swamishri's health is much improved and the pacemaker is functioning well.

We pray to *ishtadev* Bhagwan Swaminarayan that Swamishri continues to remain in good health for many more years and grant us the joy of his divine presence. ♦

Inauguration of BAPS Yogiji Maharaj Hospital

17 May 2012, Ahmedabad



Inspired by H.H. Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the BAPS Yogiji Maharaj Hospital, Ahmedabad, was inaugurated on 17 May 2012, on the occasion of Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj's 120th birthday celebration. The 100-bed multi-speciality hospital, opposite the BAPS Swaminarayan Mandir, was opened by the Honourable Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Narendrabhai Modi in the presence of senior sadhus, Pujya Mahant Swami, Pujya Doctor Swami, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami and other dignitaries.

Serving with the motto of "Aarogyam Sarvadaa – Wellness Forever", the hospital has 100 experienced doctors and 250 paramedical staff and provides standard allopathic treatment as well as preventive and alternative treatments like Panchkarma, Ayurveda, Yoga, Homeopathy and Naturopathy.

During the brief Vedic inauguration cere-

mony the Chief Minister of Gujarat was joined by Health Minister Shri Jaynarayan Vyas, Shri Bharat Barot, Shri Purshottamdas D. Patel and Shri Fulchand Agrawal and other dignitaries.

After the inauguration the guests were taken on a brief tour of the hospital, during which they interacted with doctors, hospital administrators and patients.

Thereafter, the Chief Minister and other guests were honoured in the special assembly held in the mandir auditorium.

During the assembly, Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami gave an introduction of how the hospital was conceived and built, "In around 1962-63, about 70 of us young sadhus were staying in Akshar Bhuvan in Mumbai. Dr Swami had set up a small in-house dispensary and so the devotees there requested Yogiji Maharaj for permission to set up a small clinic for the benefit

of the sadhus and devotees. Yogiji Maharaj said that one will be built in Ahmedabad. A few years ago, Pramukh Swami Maharaj initiated this hospital and so it was named after him. However, he insisted that since this hospital is the result of Yogiji Maharaj's blessings it should be named after him. Even though all the official documents, registrations and licences had already been obtained, Pramukh Swami was firm that the name must be changed. This reflects Swamishri's devotion for his guru and so now it is named the BAPS Yogiji Maharaj Hospital."

Thereafter, addressing the packed audience of dignitaries and devotees, the Chief Minister said, "Even without this hospital, the sadhus have made tremendous efforts to preserve the health of Gujarat. They have inspired over four million people to quit addictions and lead healthier lives.... Only Pramukh Swami Maharaj could have thought of combining modern medicine and Ayurveda in one hospital."

The sponsors and doctors of the BAPS hospital were honoured on stage.

Then Pujya Mahant Swami spoke to the gathering about the selfless, saintly life of Yogiji Maharaj and how it touched the hearts of all. He said, "Though Yogiji Maharaj had studied only up to sixth standard, he understood the state of society and people very well. He spiritually uplifted children, youths and devotees and endeavoured to please them."

Finally, Pujya Dr Swami also addressed the audience saying, "Today, the message we have to learn from Yogi Jayanti is that we have to purify our heart. By doing this, the need to seek medical help will be minimized and when we do need it the doctors will be inspired to treat with extraordinary skill. The doctors and staff should serve regarding the hospital as a mandir. This will bring out the best in them."

The hospital inauguration and Yogi Jayanti assembly concluded with *arti*. ♦



Grand Rath Yatra Celebration

21 June 2012, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Ahmedabad



Swamishri operates the *rath* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj by remote control in the mandir *pradakshina*

Every year, millions of Hindus in India and abroad celebrate the Rath Yatra Festival with great joy and devotion. Devotees prepare colourful, decorated *raths* (chariots) ranging in size from small to enormous.

On 21 June 2012, thousands of devotees gathered at the BAPS Mandir in Ahmedabad to celebrate the Rath Yatra festival in the divine presence of Pramukh Swami Maharaj. As Swamishri emerged from the lift onto the mandir precincts, he was greeted by two *balaks* attired as Lord Jagannathji. Then, as he proceeded towards the main mandir, he was flanked by *balaks* in sadhu costumes playing drums. In front was Shri Harikrishna Maharaj seated on a small intricately decorated motorized *rath*, which Swamishri operated by remote control. In the background, vibrant

bhajans and music enriched the festive ambience. Every vantage point had been occupied by the devotees for darshan. On the front podium of the mandir, Swamishri performed *pujan* and *arti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj. Then, the *murti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj was placed in the large, decorative, hand-pulled *rath* on the mandir grounds. Swamishri then waved a BAPS flag from the mandir podium to initiate the Rath Yatra. Senior and other sadhus pulled the *rath* around the perimeter of the mandir as Swamishri looked on. In front of the *rath* were dancing groups of children and youths in traditional costumes and devotees in traditional attire. The mandir grounds echoed with melodious bhajans and joyous singing as thousands of devotees enjoyed this divine darshan.



Swamishri performs *arti* of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj

Guru Purnima Celebration

3 July 2012, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Ahmedabad



Swamishri on stage during the Guru Purnima Celebration

Even before the morning sun had peeked above the horizon, the mandir was abuzz with streams of devotees, young and old, eager to witness today's historic occasion. For the first time since Pramukh Swami Maharaj became spiritual guru of BAPS, the Guru Purnima Celebration was to be held in his presence in Ahmedabad.

Today was the climax of many days of detailed preparations to cater for the 30,000-plus devotees expected for this momentous celebration. Sadhus and volunteers of the parking, kitchen, *sabha*, audio-visual, security and other departments had planned meticulously to ensure everything went smoothly. The decoration department volunteers had spent the night adding finishing touches to the embellishments throughout the mandir premises. Volunteers of all departments took up their duties before dawn.

The dining arrangements for the devotees had been set up in the Pramukh Vatika grounds

behind the BAPS Yogiji Maharaj Hospital opposite the mandir. Six large marquees had been erected to shelter devotees in the event of unpredictable monsoon rains.

Everything was ready for the grand historic celebration. Devotees had filled both the upper Yagnapurush Sabhagruh and lower Pramukh Swami Auditorium, as well as, occupied every inch of available space in the mandir compound, where the assembly was relayed live on three large LED screens.

Swamishri emerged from his room, greeting everyone with folded hands on the way up to the main mandir for Thakorji's darshan. The mandir *pradakshina* was lined on both sides with over 300 sadhus, who had come from many mandirs throughout Gujarat. Swamishri placed his hand on their heads to bless them all while going around the *parikrama*. After Thakorji's darshan Swamishri returned to his room to perform his morning puja.



Swamishri individually blesses the sadhus



Guru Purnima assembly

Meanwhile, the Guru Purnima assembly had started with *dhun*, *prathana* and *bhajans* by the sadhus. Thereafter, there were speeches by senior sadhus. Viveksagar Swami spoke on the need for a guru on the spiritual path, since without him *atmagnan* cannot be attained. Anandswarup Swami spoke on how Pramukh Swami Maharaj had obeyed all of Yogiji Maharaj's wishes and served as an ideal disciple. Ishwarcharan Swami spoke about Yogiji Maharaj's understanding of Shriji Maharaj's divine glory and how Yogiji Maharaj saw divinity in every act of Shastriji Maharaj. In between, youths performed a splendid traditional dance to the tune of the bhajan, "*Gurudev tumhāre charan kamalme...*".

Just before 11.00 a.m. Swamishri exited his room and passed through the jam-packed mandir compound towards the assembly halls. First, Swamishri went to the lower auditorium where the devotees, who were watching a live relay of the *sabha*, greeted him with rousing applause and heartfelt *jais*. Then Swamishri took his place in the upper *sabhagruh* where the celebration assembly was in progress. The stage was beautifully adorned with a backdrop of floral arches and *mur-tis* of Akshar-Purushottam and Guru Parampara.

After Swamishri's arrival on stage, *balaks* enacted a skit reminiscing the tough times Shastriji Maharaj and his sadhus had faced in the early days of the Sanstha's history.

Then, the *sadgurus* and other sadhus honoured Swamishri with decorative garlands

devoutly prepared by devotees from India and abroad.

Thereafter, Swamishri inaugurated two new English publications produced by Swaminarayan Aksharpith: *Essence of the Upanishads* (translation of the Gujarati publication *Upanishad Marma*) and *Contemplative Poems* – a collection of inspiring poems promoting family values.

Then, all the devotees offered *mantra pushpanjali* after the sadhus had recited Vedic shloks.

Finally, Swamishri blessed the assembly, "The goal of human life is to attain the knowledge of God and *atma*. And God himself manifested to give us this knowledge of Akshar and Purushottam, Brahman and Parabrahman, and Atma and Paramatma. We have taken many births, but only when God and his true Sadhu are attained does the *jiva* attain liberation. There is darkness due to ignorance, but when a true guru is attained and true knowledge is acquired from him, *moksha* is achieved. One who removes our ignorance is a guru. 'Gu' is darkness and 'ru' is light. What is our ignorance, that 'this is mine, this is mine...'. "

Then, as Swamishri departed from the assembly, *balaks* performed a dance based on the bhajan, "*Mārā Swāmini thāye vāh vāh vāh...*"

Thus, this historic Guru Purnima festival was celebrated with great devotion and fanfare. The entire celebration was webcast, enabling thousands of devotees all over the world to witness this grand historic occasion. ♦

UK & Europe

BAPS CHARITIES ANNUAL CHALLENGE

April 2012, UK



More than 3,400 devotees of all ages at 16 BAPS centres around the UK – Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Coventry, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Havant, Leicester, Loughborough, Luton, Manchester (Ashton-under-Lyne), Milton Keynes, Nottingham, Preston, Southend-on-Sea, Wellingborough – braved blistery April showers for the BAPS Charities Annual Challenge to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support and other worthy causes to help further their great work.

Macmillan Cancer Support is one of the UK's leading cancer charities, providing "practical, medical and financial support to push for better cancer care."

In London, on 29 April, the wet weather did not dampen the participants' enthusiasm as the Challenge kicked off from BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in the presence of distinguished guests. It brought together members of the community from a wide variety of backgrounds and ages – ranging from three to 97 – to walk, jog or run a distance of 10 kilometres.

Michelle Martin, Head of Regional Fundraising for Macmillan Cancer Support, emphasized, "We are really excited to be working with BAPS Charities, not only on this fantastic event but in providing specific services to address the challenges facing the South Asian community during their cancer journey. We are looking forward

to the year ahead and making this partnership a success."

A week earlier, on 21 April, more than 40 participants in Leicester had taken the more challenging option of cycling 30 kilometres.

FAMILY HARMONY SATSANG SHIBIR

6 May 2012, Edinburgh, Scotland



Over 50 devotees attended the one-day Satsang Shibir on Family Harmony conducted by BAPS sadhus from London at the Loanhead Community Learning Centre in Edinburgh, Scotland.

The *shibir* included speeches on causes of family discord, and on developing and maintaining family harmony. The delegates participated in interactive team-building games which taught the importance of teamwork within the family.

The *shibir* concluded with an interesting question-and-answer session.

The participants found that the *shibir* provided valuable guidance on the intricacies of family harmony and parenting in ways they had never thought about before.

NATIONAL KUC SHISHU TRAINING DAY:

'BE THE BEST'

26 May 2012, UK & Europe

Over 350 *shishus* (children aged between 3 and 8 years) and parents from across the UK attended the National KUC Shishu Training Day for the Kidz Ultimate Challenge (KUC) in the UK & Europe.



Entitled ‘Be the Best’, as per the blessings of Pramukh Swami Maharaj for the KUC, the programme focused on providing young children the key skill sets required for the forthcoming KUC competitions. The training day also enabled parents to learn how to enhance their child’s development and refine their parenting skills.

The children were taught the art of storytelling, using emotions, props and sound effects. Arts and crafts sessions were organized to educate them on the use of colour, crafts materials and decoration. To test what they had learned, the *shishus* and parents were given the chance to decorate their own *arti* plates and produce greeting cards – with impressive results.

A bhakti class was arranged for 3- to 5-year-old children and their parents teaching them how to perform *mala*, *pradakshinas*, *panchang pranam*, and other devotional activities. It provided an important opportunity for family bonding. The class concluded with the children learning to sing bhajans with a view to boosting their confidence and singing ability.

Experienced volunteers taught public speaking skills to 6- to 8-year-olds, touching upon such aspects as body language, eye contact, and intonation.

The training day provided the children and parents a vision and inspiration to become ‘the best’ as a child and parent.

EUROPE SATSANG SHIBIR: ‘KARIYE RAJI GHANSHYAM’ 9 June 2012, Milan, Italy



More than 60 devotees from Central Europe gathered for a Satsang *shibir* entitled ‘Kariye Raji Ghanshyam’ in Milan on Saturday 9 June 2012 in the presence of BAPS sadhus from London. The *shibir* was also attended by the Consul-General of India for Milan, Mr Verma, and his wife.

The *shibir* was structured around three key Satsang concepts: *mahima*, *milan* and *mamatva* – to develop a greater understanding of God, fellow devotees and the Satsang fellowship as a whole.

The *shibir* featured a variety of activities, interactive exercises, bhajans and spiritual discourses.

North America

SATSANG SHIBIRS 2012: ‘RAJIPO’ May 2012, USA



During May, one-day Satsang Shibirs were

held at BAPS Mandirs across North America. The day was divided into spiritual discourses, interactive workshops and skits on the theme of 'Ap Rijho em Raji'. Children, youths and seniors alike were inspired by the audio-visual presentations and learnt various ways of earning Swamishri's true blessings through the four essential pillars of Ekantik Dharma. The day ended with Swamishri's blessings and a short prayer.

BAPS VOLUNTEERS AWARDED THE QUEEN ELIZABETH II DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL
3 May 2012, Toronto, Canada



In recognition of their tireless voluntary efforts for the betterment of society, the volunteers of BAPS were proudly awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal by Senator Dr Asha Seth, during a special programme held at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, Toronto. Dr Seth said that this honour is reserved for those who have made "a significant contribution to a particular province, territory, region or community within Canada, or an achievement abroad that brings credit to Canada".

The Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal programme is administered by The Chancellery of Honours, as part of the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General.

Africa

OPENING OF BAPS SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR
14-15 April 2012, Tzaneen, South Africa

A two-day Mandir Mahotsav marked the opening of the new BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Tzaneen, in the Limpopo province of



South Africa.

In the early morning of 14 April a Vishwashanti Yagna was performed. In the afternoon, the *murtis* to be consecrated in the mandir were taken around the town in a festive *nagar yatra*. In the evening, the sadhus and youths presented a kirtan *aradhana*.

On the morning of Sunday 15 April, the sacred *murtis*, which had previously been sanctified by Pramukh Swami Maharaj in India, were installed in the new mandir with Vedic rites by Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami.

About 500 devotees from BAPS centres in South Africa, including Johannesburg, Lenasia, Rustenburg, Pretoria, Durban, Pietersburg and Louis Trichardt, as well as from Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania attended this historic and auspicious occasion.

OPENING OF BAPS SHRI SWAMINARAYAN MANDIR
26-28 April 2012, Johannesburg, South Africa



Devotees from BAPS centres in South Africa, including Durban, Cape Town, East

London, Rustenburg, Pretoria, Tzaneen and Louis Trichardt, were joined by devotees from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Botswana for the grand Mandir Mahotsav to mark the opening of the newly rebuilt BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Mayfair West, Johannesburg, South Africa, in the presence of Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami and 13 sadhus.

On 26 April, 228 devotees participated in the 57-*kundi* Vishwashanti Mahayagna in which prayers were offered for world peace and the happiness of all.

In the afternoon, the *murtis* to be consecrated in the mandir were paraded in five beautifully decorated floats on a festive and colourful *nagar yatra* through Johannesburg city. Over 1,200 devotees joined the 5 km procession which stretched for 800 metres.

On the morning of 27 April, the sacred *murtis*, all of which had been previously sanctified by Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj in India, were installed in the new Mandir with Vedic rites by Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami. More than 2,000 devotees from all around Africa were present to witness this historic and auspicious occasion. Also present on this occasion were the Ambassador of Nepal and other dignitaries.

On the afternoon of 28 April, the Mahila Wing presented an inspiring cultural programme of dance, drama and music titled 'Yug nario ni gatha'. The programme shed light on the lives of great women devotees, such as, Shabri, Draupadi, Suniti and Jivuba.

In the evening, children, teenagers and youths presented a wonderful cultural programme. *Balaks* performed a drama titled 'Mandirno Chamatkaar' which showed how BAPS mandirs inspire virtuous living in individuals and entire communities. *Kishores* and youths delivered talks on how coming to the mandir has helped transform their lives. The programme ended with an address by Pujya Ghanshyamcharan

Swami, in which he emphasized the importance of Satsang in living a fruitful life.

MURTI-PRATISHTHA MAHOTSAV 21-23 May 2012, Arusha, Tanzania



A grand Mandir Mahotsav was celebrated to mark the opening of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Arusha, Tanzania, in the presence of Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami and 13 sadhus. Children, youths and elders from centers throughout Tanzania (Dar-es-Salaam, Mwanza, Tanga and others) wholeheartedly served in the construction project as well as the Mandir Mahotsav preparations. The three-day Mandir Mahotsav began on Monday 21 May with the welcome assembly in which the importance of mandirs in daily life was highlighted and a souvenir magazine was released to commemorate the inauguration of the Mandir. On Tuesday 22 May, 430 devotees participated in the 63-*kund* Vishwashanti Mahayagna in which prayers were offered for world peace and prosperity. In the afternoon, 1,500 devotees from BAPS centres in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa and Botswana joined the colourful procession in which the *murtis* were taken around the town in six beautifully decorated floats.

In the evening assembly youths of Dar-es-Salaam performed a skit depicting the true value of mandirs in society. The sadhus narrated inspirational incidents of youths demonstrating the noble values they learn from mandirs. On the morning of Wednesday 23 May (Jeth

sud 2), the sacred *murtis*, which had been previously sanctified by Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj in India, were installed in the new Mandir with Vedic rites by Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami. More than 1,800 devotees from all around Africa were present to witness this historic and auspicious occasion. During the *murti-pratishtha* assembly, Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami blessed the assembly. Present in the assembly were the regional commissioner, Mr. Isidore Leka Shirima, and the Minister of Information, Youth, Culture and Sports, Dr. Emmanuel Mchimbi who was representing His Excellency Mr. Jakaya Kikwete, the President of Tanzania. In the afternoon, the Women's Wing held a special Mahila Sammelan to celebrate and commemorate the new mandir in Arusha.

MURTI-PRATISHTHA MAHOTSAV 21-23 June 2012, Mombasa, Kenya



The three-day Mandir Mahotsav to commemorate the opening of the newly renovated BAPS Mandir in Mombasa include a grand 100-*kundi* Vedic Vishwashanti Mahayagna on 21 June in which 423 couples participated. Then, in the afternoon, the *murtis* were taken around the town in a festive *nagar yatra* in which over 3,100 devotees participated. Five beautifully decorated floats carried the *murtis* along the 3-km procession route.

On the morning of Friday 22 June, the sacred *murtis* of Shri Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj,



Shri Guru Parampara, Shri Ganapatiji and Shri Hanumanji, all of which had been previously sanctified by Pujya Pramukh Swami Maharaj in India, were installed in the new Mandir with Vedic rites by Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami. More than 2,500 devotees from all around Africa were present to witness this historic and auspicious occasion.

During the *murti-pratishtha* assembly, Pujya Ghanshyamcharan Swami spoke on the glory of Akshar-Purushottam Maharaj and how mandirs help to preserve this eternal philosophy. He also spoke about how mandirs reinforce moral teachings and nurture spiritual values. In the evening, an inspiring cultural programme was presented by Mombasa Bal-Yuvak Mandal.

On the afternoon of Saturday 23 June, the ladies wing held a special Mahila Sammelan to celebrate the opening of the new Mandir in Mombasa. In the evening, a concert of bhajans was performed by the BAPS sadhus and youths.

Asia Pacific

SATSANG AND KISHORE-KISHORI SHIBIRS 9 April 2012, Auckland, New Zealand

On 9 April 2012, a Satsang Shibir and a Kishore-Kishori Shibir were held at BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Auckland, New Zealand, in the presence of Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and other sadhus.

In the Satsang Shibir, themed 'Pratigna', Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and sadhus delivered



lectures on a variety of topics, including *seva*, tolerance, *asmita* and satsang reading. A group discussion on 'Vani vivek' provided practical advice to the devotees on how to implement the lessons learnt in their personal and family lives. The *shibir* concluded with an insightful question-answer session with Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami on how to lead a life of service and spirituality.

In the Kishore-Kishori Shibir, themed 'Our Vachanamrut', over 75 teenagers learnt about the basics of the Vachanamrut, the main shastra of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. Enlightening lectures and group activities were conducted by the sadhus. During a question-answer session Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami provided practical guidance on how to properly read the Vachanamrut.

The *kishores* and *kishoris* pledged to regularly read the Vachanamrut and apply its teachings in their daily lives.

SHRIMAD BHAGWAT PARAYAN 15-25 April 2012, Hong Kong



BAPS sadhus held a *parayan* in Hong Kong

on the Shrimad Bhagavat, one of the most revered Hindu shastras. The five-day *parayan* began with a Kalash Yatra through the streets of the Kowloon area of the city.

The discourses were delivered in Hindi and were attended by over 400 devotees and well-wishers daily, including leaders from Hong Kong's Indian business community and other professionals. Through elaboration on the original Sanskrit text, listeners learnt about the Bhagavat's eternal messages of righteousness, devotion and the greatness of a true God-realized Sadhu.

In addition to the *parayan*, BAPS sadhus presented a *kirtan aradhana* and held a Satsang Shibir.

Also, during their 10-day *vicharan* in Hong Kong, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and the sadhus conducted *padhramanis* and performed *mahapujas*, inspiring values of family unity, Hindu culture and spirituality.

SATSANG VICHARAN 26 April-15 May 2012, Singapore



As part of their *vicharan* in the Asia Pacific region, Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and sadhus visited the emerging satsang centres of Bangkok in Thailand (26 April to 2 May) and Singapore (11 to 15 May). One-day Satsang Shibirs, themed 'Pratigna', were conducted by the sadhus for the volunteers and devotees of Bangkok and Singapore. Sadhus delivered lectures on a variety of top-

ics, including tolerance, unity, *seva* and *asmita*. The *shibirs* concluded with an insightful question-answer session with Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami on how to lead a life of pure devotion. In addition to the *shibirs*, the sadhus also held satsang assemblies, performed *padhramanis* to inspire family values, and held a collective *mahapuja* praying for world peace and harmony.

SATSANG VICHARAN

4-11 May 2012, Indonesia



Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and a group of sadhus conducted satsang assemblies and house visits in Indonesia as part of their Asia Pacific *vicharan*. The first two satsang assemblies were held in Jakarta, at the Sadhu Vasvani Centre and the Sindhu Gruh. The next assembly was held in Jojakarta. The sadhus then held a satsang assembly in Denpasar, Bali, where the local community was represented by a group of Indonesian students. Pujya Tyagvallabh Swami and sadhus also conducted *padhramnis* to guide and inspire people.

India

VEDIC MAHAPUJAS BY SURAT BAPS BALAKS

24 April-31 May 2012, Surat

During the summer vacation, *balaks* of Surat Bal Mandal offered prayers for world peace by performing Vedic *mahapujas*.

Between 24 April and 20 May, 204 *balaks* were trained in 68 groups of three to perform



all rituals of the Vedic ceremony.

On 16 and 17 May on the festive day of Yogi Jayanti the *balaks* were blessed by Pramukh Swami Maharaj at Sarangpur.

After returning to Surat, from 21 to 31 May the *balaks* performed *mahapujas* at the homes of 1,025 devotees.

ANNUAL BAL VIKAS PARVA

May 2012, India



Organized by the Children's Activities Central Office in Ahmedabad, the Annual Bal Vikas Parva was held at about 325 centres in Gujarat, Mumbai, Delhi and Jaipur during the summer vacation. The main theme of the programmes was 'Agnā and Upasana'.

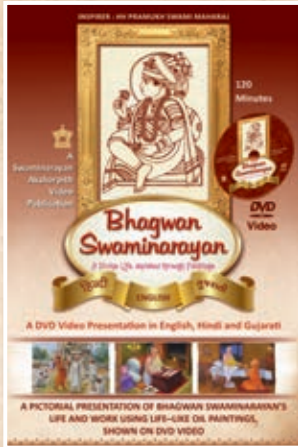
In all, about 25,000 children participated for a period ranging from three to seven days. The programme was successfully organized through the intense efforts of sadhus and 5,000 *karyakars*.



Swaminarayan Aksharpith Publications

BHAGWAN SWAMINARAYAN

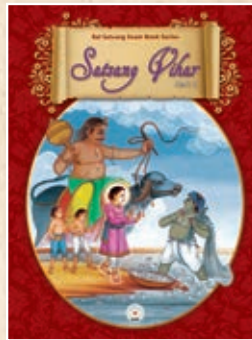
A Divine Life Depicted through Paintings



Bhagwan Swaminarayan (1781-1830) was a spiritual luminary who established the Swaminarayan Sampradaya – transforming lives, banishing prevalent superstitions, leading the religious and social evolution of early 19th Century India. The pictorial DVD presentation of his life and work has been made by using 74

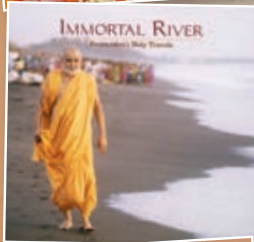
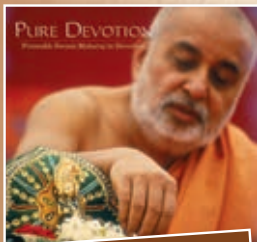
life-like oil paintings on canvas. The commentary is in three languages: English, Hindi and Gujarati.

SATSANG VIHAR, PART 1

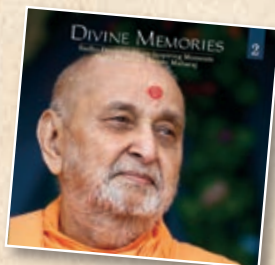


As part of an introductory study programme of BAPS Swaminarayan Hinduism for children *Satsang Vihar*, Part 1 enables children to learn the basics of Hinduism and the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. The book deals with interesting and inspiring stories and messages from the lives of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, guru *parampara* and his devotees. The text is gorgeously illustrated to rivet the attention and convey the essence of each story.

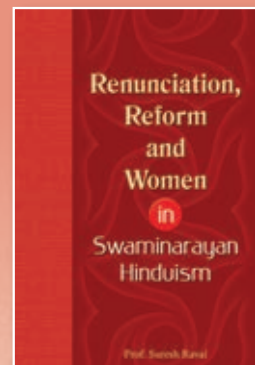
PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ



As a humble effort, some fascinating aspects of Swamishri's unfathomable personality have been re-produced in a series of small books written by BAPS sadhus. The handy publications deal with his love for God and devotion to him (*Pure Devotion*), his relentless *vicharan* for the uplift of society (*Immortal River*), an account of his correspondences with devotees (*With Blessings*), many inspiring incidents about his divinity (*Divinity*) and the testimonies of sadhus who have observed and experienced his saintliness and love for mankind (*Divine Memories*).



RENUNCIATION, REFORM AND WOMEN IN SWAMINARAYAN HINDUISM



The book delves into the subject of eight-fold celibacy in Hindu asceticism. It deals with the history and development of asceticism, culminating with how Bhagwan Swaminarayan re-instituted the Hindu tradition of absolute *brahmacharya* in his ascetic order.

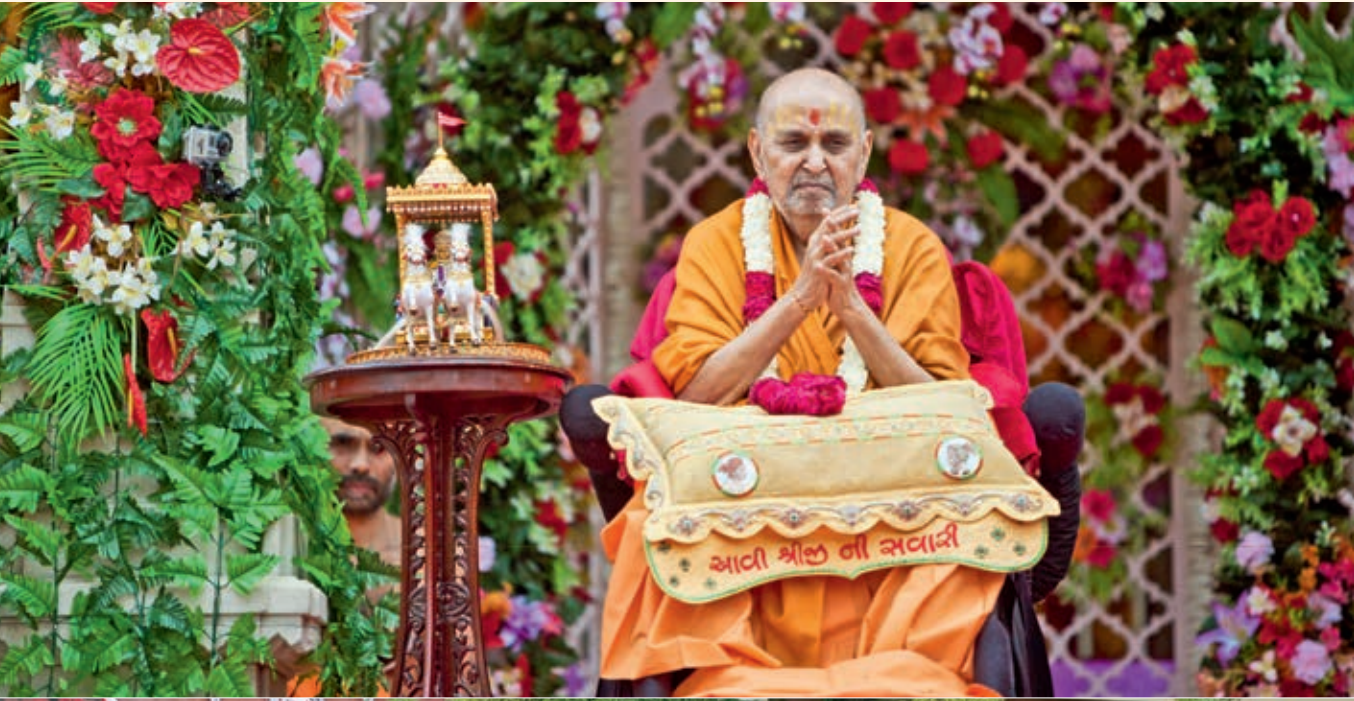
The author, Professor Suresh Raval, a Professor in English at the University of Arizona, has produced a scholarly and an enlightening publication for all readers.

DVD and books available at all BAPS bookstores



BAPS NEWS

- 1-2. *Murti-pratishtha* of the splendid renovated BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Mombasa, Kenya (22 June 2012).
3. On the final day of the National Youth Convention, Swamishri sanctifies the trophies to be presented to outstanding participants of the youth *adhiveshan*. The *sadguru* sadhus on stage with Swamishri, with the mandir in the background (8 June 2012, Sarangpur).



RATH YATRA CELEBRATION 21 June 2012, Ahmedabad

1. Swamishri with Shri Harikrishna Maharaj (in a rath) greets the sadhus and devotees from the front podium of the mandir.
 2. Senior and other sadhus pull the decorated rath of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj in the celebration procession around the perimeter of the mandir.
- Inset:** Swamishri waves the BAPS flag to launch the celebration procession.